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PREFERENCES
IN ART, LIFE, AND
LITERATURE. BY
HARRY QUILTER M.A.
TRIN: COLL: CAMB:
OF THE INNER TEM-
PLE, Esq., BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

1892

SWAN SONNEN-
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ALL THAT
IS GOOD
IN THIS
BOOK I DEDICA
TE TO MY WIFE
AND WISH IT
WERE MORE WO
RTHY OF HER 
HARRY QUILTER

PREFACE.



HARDLY know whether this book should be called old or new. Half the matter at least has already appeared at various intervals during the past seventeen years. But even this portion has been revised, recast, and in many places rewritten for the present publication. And rather more than a third is entirely new, having been written within the last three months. Lastly, of the previously-published portion, some fifty pages appeared in a privately-printed pamphlet, and an equal quantity has been taken here and there from a series of three hundred articles (written in the *Spectator*), and appears for the first time in connected form.

Therefore I may say with Charles Reade,¹ that "to describe this work as a reprint would be unfair to the public and to me. The English language is copious, and in any true man's hands quite able to convey the truth," viz. that this is a new work in which a considerable amount of revised writing has been included.

Did not the world move so fast nowadays, I might perhaps allege as a sufficient reason for the inclusion of those papers which have formerly appeared, that they represent the best part of nearly twenty years' service as a public writer, and that during that period I have been frequently asked to reprint several of the Essays in question. But I doubt whether such a plea is allowable at a time when the Press is groaning with new works, and at all events the above are not the chief reasons which have led me to make the selection.

¹ In his preface to *The Cloister and the Hearth*.

My first desire has been, by presenting my views upon Art and its connection with life, in various forms, and by recording in connected sequence the critical opinions expressed during many years upon English and Foreign painting, to enable the public to judge whether these views and criticisms be substantially just or no, and whether time has not, so far at all events, justified my words. Not even the bitterest critic—and some critics are very bitter—can feel more keenly than myself the imperfections of temper, haste, and form which have so frequently disfigured my periodical writing. Nor can any one resent more than I deplore the apparent indifference and scorn with which I have approached and censured work which has always taken labour and thought, and patient, if mistaken, skill to produce. Of old, when I considered that a picture was in a bad style of art, I habitually ignored, if I did not forget, the personal feeling of the artist.

As we grow older we see that even the truest truths of our youth are only partially tenable; that our harshest, most unjust antagonists have had some justice, some right on their side; but in early manhood I think a critic is almost necessarily “a good hater,” if he be very much in earnest. If he sees at all, he sees so *very* clearly: he cannot believe but that his world is apparent to every one who wishes to look. Compromise appears to him equally base and feeble—he throws every half-loaf out of the window impatiently—better far no bread at all than such a beggarly portion! At least so I fear the present writer felt, and feeling, erred; and destroyed by impatience and intolerance the influence he might perhaps otherwise have gained.

Nothing, then, shall be said here in extenuation of these faults, nor would I plead, at this late hour, *ad misericordiam*. The work must stand or fall with all its imperfections on its head. But with regard to inadequate, ignorant, or mistaken criticism, a few words are, in justice to myself, necessary; for such charges are easily and frequently brought against a public writer, especially against one who does not belong to any of the well-recognised journalistic coteries.

In the course of the years covered by the Essays in this

book (1872-1890), I must have seen and written of nearly half a million pictures and sculptures, and criticised several hundred books, chiefly relating to art. This work has been done for the most part at a few hours' notice, and generally with no time for revision or reflection. That is one of the conditions of newspaper writing. In such circumstance there is, I dare to say, no possibility of avoiding occasional errors, mistakes, or blunders, especially in writing which at least *aims* at independence.

Such mistakes I have made not infrequently in my critical life, and have had them dealt with severely enough, by those whose business it is to furnish entertaining paragraphs to the lighter journals. That was all right and fair: a critic is paid *not* to make mistakes, and, if he does commit them, should not "scape whipping." And I am a little pleased to remember that in nearly twenty years the paragraph censors have only detected me in some half-dozen serious blunders, three of which I had previously discovered. I do not count in these misprints of proper names, or similar clerical errors.

One form of attack, however, which has been used against me, I believe, with some effectiveness, is undoubtedly most traitorous and mean—equally unworthy of a journalist and a gentleman—and that is censure which, avowedly based upon quotation, is in reality founded upon ingenious misrepresentation of an author's meaning. In cases where such condemnation is enforced by the misquotation of sentences, phrases, and even words and stops, robbed of their context, and skilfully pieced together to excite ridicule, the critic has no difficulty in apparently proving that the author or writing criticised, is vulgar, incapable, or absurd.

For the honour of journalism, I am proud to think that such *malfaisance* is extremely rare; but it does exist in London, and a well-known critic so betrayed his office with regard to a book which I wrote about six years ago. His *mala fides* I proved to his own Editor's (dis-)satisfaction in an interview wherein we compared, point by point, the reviewer's quotations and my words as I had written them. At the end of this interview, which lasted

about two hours, the Editor (who had the most wonderful memory I have ever known), went through each instance I had brought before him, and repeated the criticism and my objection, and asked if that was my case. I assented, and asked him, in my turn, if he could defend his reviewer, if he could assert that there was not a manifest and intentional wrong done me by the article. He admitted that no defence was possible; that the review was entirely unjust, and demanded what I "wanted him to do." I said, "Publish in your paper what you have just acknowledged"! "What!" he said, "insert an interview with an author against my own critic! That would be the 'New Journalism' with a vengeance! Well, I'll see what I can do." So he departed, but of course nothing was done. The "affair was too unimportant."

The critic's name—which I knew throughout—I prefer not to mention. He will probably not resent the omission. I heard afterwards that he had boasted of having done rather a smart thing in journalism; and after, I hope, a somewhat different fashion, I took a quiet revenge a year or two later. He wrote a nice little book (to mention its nature would probably indicate the author's name), and, being then Editor of the *Universal Review*, I sat down and wrote the very nicest criticism thereof which I possibly could, and put it at the head of the most important books of the month; and I have since then always felt that we were—quits.

To return to the question of just and unjust criticism. The only fair way is to take the work as a whole, and consider whether, having regard to its amount and the circumstances under which it was done, the result is admirable, or the reverse. Especially with critical work which has been before the public some years, the date of writing is an essential point, and in many cases time will either have proved or disproved the justice of the judgment.

The fashion for certain artists passes away, but fine art remains fine, and if the critic has sought that out in the first instance, his words should remain also.

In reprinting as the last Essay in this book, verbatim, some of the criticisms I wrote from year to year in a weekly news-

paper, I give any reader who cares to judge my work, the materials for decision. On the whole, are these verdicts (if I must call them so, though *Preferences* is the title I should choose) substantiated by the fuller knowledge of to-day? That is for the public to decide, and with anxiety I wait their sentence. The right intention of the work should not count, nor should, in this aspect, the deficiencies of its manner. The single question is the justice and insight of the criticism. If these are lacking, no more is to be said.

A last word of a less serious kind on the vexed question of a critic's right to point out the bad as well as to define the good amongst the subjects he deals with. In this matter, though I think his duty clear, he may be left by those of another opinion quite securely to the justice of the Fates. "Exposition" is easy enough and even more safe than easy; but "criticism" of the real kind above foreshadowed, is a more than parlous matter. Those who endeavour to guide public opinion arouse animosity almost in proportion to their earnestness and insight.

I saw this choice of Hercules (the pleasure of exposition *v.* the duty of criticism) placed before me many years since, and with some misgiving, hesitation, and regret, elected for the latter course. Perhaps I am still at heart content that my decision was not for the primrose path; but I certainly should have been glad to have found the strait road a little less stony, and a little more accommodating. What Thackeray calls "thorns in the cushion" are every whit as plentiful in the seat of the critic as in that of the Editor. I have tried both vocations, singly and in combination, and the difference of discomfort is merely fractional.irate artists, actors, and authors, furious relations, indignant contributors, and every description of journalist, from the sardonic Saturday Reviewer, to the ingenious young gentleman who disports himself in the columns of the *Empire Gazette*, have been severe, satirical, pathetic, or abusive at my expense. The shape of my head, the roundness of my shoulders, the fit of my clothes, the colour of my necktie, the profession of my relatives, the quality of my ancestors, the amount of my income, my poor little personal "preferences," and even my holiday trips and the furniture of my office, have been animadverted upon as equally displeasing

and criminal. Like Mark Twain when he "ran for Governor," I feel inclined to sign myself "once an honest man, but now"—and so on with the initials of the various opprobrious epithets bestowed upon me. The ingenious Mr. Whistler hit upon a new form of torture by depriving me of the first letter of my name, and Mr. Richmond enlivened the somewhat dreary proceedings of an Art Congress by furious demands to see my pictures, and a harangue on my iniquities so majestic and impassioned that he had to be called to order by the Chairman. One critic *à tout faire* took it much to heart that I should try to paint, and pursued me, with the help of his staff, in half the periodicals of London town. Strong friends used to come and offer to walk with me for protection, and thick sticks to be sent me anonymously, without which I was not to stir abroad. In the back of the room in which I write, reposes a great book which I can scarcely lift, within whose covers lurk two thousand abusive notices, which I was weak enough to allow Mr. Romeike to send—a solid twenty pounds' worth of invective, without counting the labour of my secretary in sticking them in. May not these things too be called thorns in the cushion?

And yet so weak is human nature, so inconsistent, so vicious, that I miss the diatribes, the personalities, the sarcasm, the wail of this paper, the snarl of that. I miss the allusions to my numerous frailties, my relations' shortcomings, the locality where lives my tailor, and the offensive way I walk down Fleet Street. So, again, O dear old enemies, ye who

"Have done my Credit in Men's Eye much wrong:
Have drown'd my Honour in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song,"

let us have a last encounter! Once more let your antipathies and my preferences mingle in the serried columns of your favourite journals. And then—let us forget all this fine fury of opinion, and acknowledge its merely Pickwickian origin, in the sacred recesses of the Omar Khayyám Club, or where the "CHAT NOIR" mews nightly under the shadow of Montmartre.

HARRY QUILTER.

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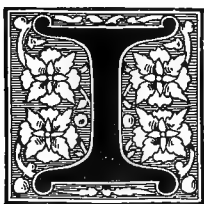
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All these plates have been printed by Messrs. Draeger and Lesieur of Paris.

* The titles of these pictures have unfortunately been transposed by the Paris printers.

A NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS.



AM desirous of tendering my hearty thanks to the artists, private owners, and Fine-Art dealers who have kindly allowed me to use their pictures or copyrights, or who have done sketches expressly for me. The names of these are as follows ; those which are printed in italics being the last-mentioned class :—

*E. K. Johnson, R.W.S., Albert Moore, R.W.S., Clara Montalba, R.W.S., E. Waterlow, A.R.A., Arthur Lemon, A. de Richemont, G. Rapin, E. Blair Leighton, A. G. Binet, S. Courtois, Henry Moore, A.R.A., Adrian Stokes, J. MacWhirter, A.R.A., Ernest Parton, Sir John Gilbert, R.A., P. R. Morris, A.R.A., T. M. Rooke, Sir John Millais, R.A., Sir F. Burton, G. F. Watts, R.A., W. W. Oules, R.A., Luke Fildes, R.A., E. J. Poynter, R.A., C. E. Perugini, Seymour Lucas, A.R.A., Dendy Sadler, Joseph Farquharson, J. Waterhouse, A.R.A., W. H. Bartlett, Charles Fairfax Murray, Messrs. Macmillan and Co., the Proprietors of the *Graphic*.*

This, I believe, completes the list of the obligations which I wish to acknowledge most gratefully ; should any name be inadvertently forgotten, I trust the omission will be pardoned. Much of the information in the Pre-Raphaelite Essay was obtained from Ford Madox Brown, John Seddon (the architect), Madame Bodichon, the late Thomas Woolner, R.A., and, under the circumstances stated elsewhere, W. Holman Hunt. To these also my best thanks are due.

ERRATA.

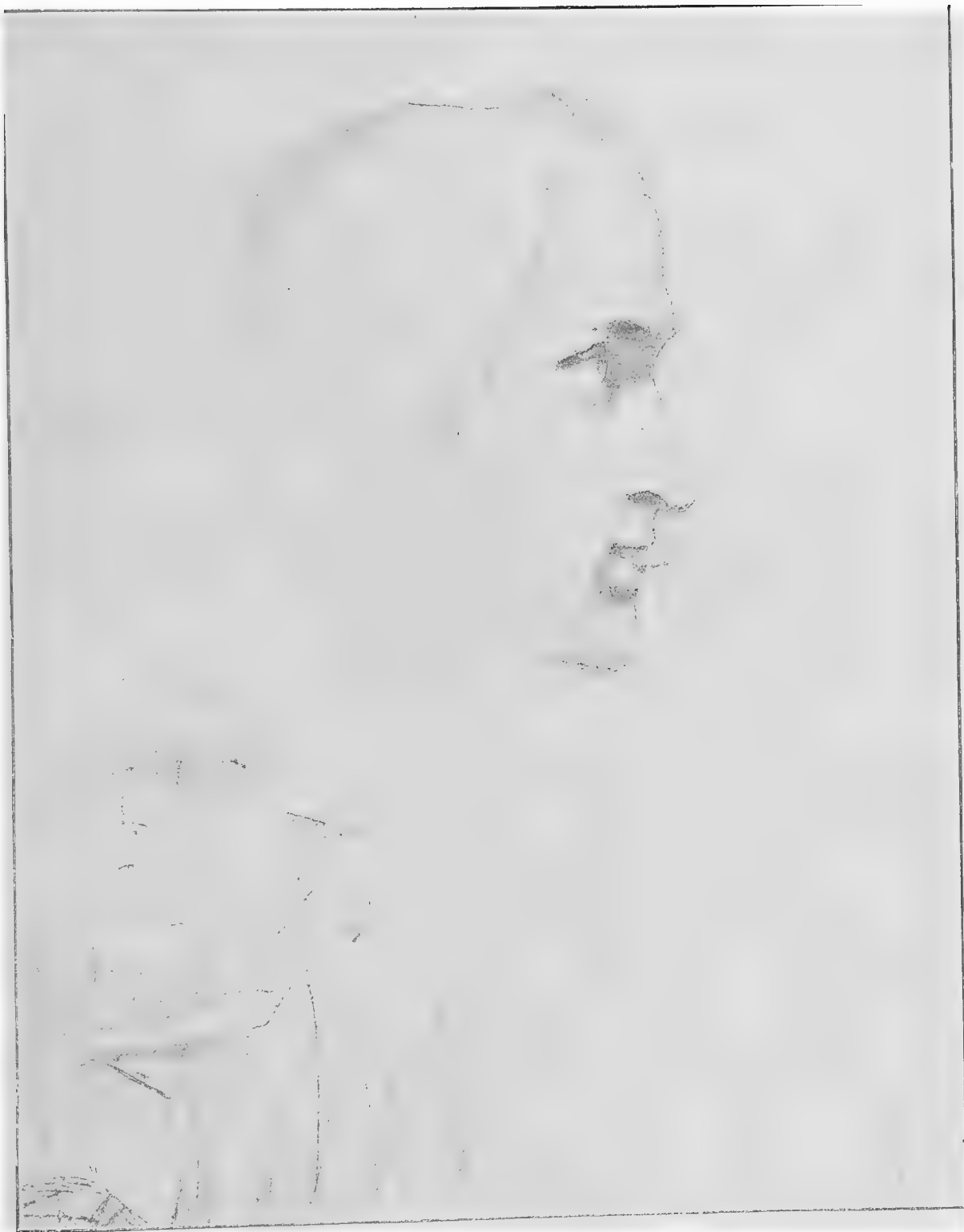
Page 118, line 3.
for "her May," read "her friend May."

Page 135, line 3.
for "small small-leaved," read "small-leaved."

Page 169, line 17.
for "Chasse de Saint Ursule," read "Châsse de Sainte Ursule."

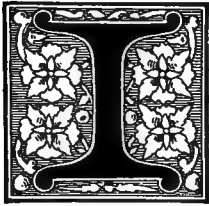
Page 393, last line.
for "hereafter," read "before."

And on pages 132, 160, 163, and 189, there are references to pictures which do not appear in the present work. The reason for this discrepancy is that the engraved blocks in question have either proved on examination to have been accidentally injured, or have been mislaid. Owing to these illustrations having been printed in Paris, this discovery was made too late for the references to be omitted in the text. The names of the pictures referred to, however, do not appear in the list of illustrations, and the blocks have been replaced by others.



STUDY OF HEAD FOR ISABELLA SUPPER

A CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF PRE-RAPHAELITISM: INTRODUCTORY.



IN the April of 1886 I suggested to the Editor of the *Contemporary Review* that a short series of two or three articles, giving the personal history of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, would probably be attractive to the public; and at his request I undertook the task. On setting to work the idea occurred to me that the paper would be far more likely to attract popular attention if it were written by one of the "Brotherhood," and circumstances showed clearly that this practically meant Mr. Holman Hunt, for Sir John Millais had steadily refused to write on this subject, and had moreover abandoned to a very considerable extent his earlier method, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti had been dead for more than three years.

When I suggested this idea to the Editor, he at once approved of it, if I could arrange the terms satisfactorily, and would be responsible for the literary form of the article; at least I was to edit the paper, and see that it was suitable for a Review. This was done. I saw Mr. Hunt and persuaded him to write the account in question, the money part of the matter was arranged satisfactorily, and all promised well. When, however, the MS., or a part of it, was sent me by Mr. Hunt, I perceived at once that whatever might be the interest from a religious and quasi-metaphysical point of view, it was not what either the Editor would like, or the public want to hear about the P.R.B. In a word, there was too much preamble, too little fact, and the arrangement of what incidents were included was desultory and somewhat haphazard. The writing of articles, in fact, is not a business which can be evolved out of the inner consciousness, and of all article-writing perhaps that kind which seeks to tell an absolutely plain story consecutively, is the most difficult to the amateur, who will insist upon disquisition, preamble, illustrations, and, worst of all, purple patches of descriptive writing.

My position was now one of some difficulty. Mr. Hunt was a friend—and a celebrated artist for whose work I had high admiration and respect; on the other hand, the Editor of the *Contemporary*, (also a friend) had embarked on this paper at my suggestion, and on my guarantee had offered a considerable sum of money for the article: I was at once bound to see Mr. Bunting¹ through, and most desirous not to offend Mr. Hunt. I knew, or thought I knew, what the public wanted to know about the P.R.B., and that Mr. Hunt could tell it to them: only he had not done so, and unless the paper were remodelled I felt its success could only be very partial. Under the circumstances, I did what was perhaps unjustifiable, *i.e.* wrote the first portion of the article myself, chiefly on facts obtained in conversation from Mr. Hunt and notes supplied by him. I can't remember at this lapse of time whether I took down any of his actual words, but I think not. My memory was then a good one, and with the help of the painter's notes, I could trust it to reproduce accurately the information supplied to me. Mr. Hunt and myself revised the proofs, the paper was signed with his name, duly appeared, and was instantly and peculiarly successful. Very generously Mr. Hunt offered me a cheque for half the amount received, but I did not feel that I could accept any money for what I had not done under my own name, and what I would not have done at all had it not been for the peculiar circumstances.

Though I do not know that any one was specially wronged thereby, and though a not inconsiderable proportion of articles signed by celebrated names are doubtless actually written by journalists, on the facts which the supposed authors supply, it had never been my lot to be mixed up before with that species of literature, and it made me a little uncomfortable. It is one thing being accustomed to sell your brains, and another to sell your prejudices, and my education had taught me only the former.

After the cheque was declined however, an arrangement was come to between Mr. Hunt and myself, whereby I was to have the right of re-publishing this article (and the subsequent paper in continuation of the same subject) in a book which I had in contemplation on the "History of Pre-Raphaelitism." I had previously received and collected a good deal of interesting information about the pre-Raphaelites, and I thought the embodiment of Mr. Hunt's description of his early struggles and personal reminiscences would greatly add to the interest of my work, especially if appropriately illustrated by the early pictures of the Brotherhood. To make a long story short, my book was proposed to a publisher (and was indeed sold to him), but was never written, for shortly after my

¹ The Editor of the *Contemporary Review*.

agreement with the publishers had been signed, and when I had with considerable difficulty procured permission to include reproductions of many of the most interesting pre-Raphaelite pictures in my history, an announcement appeared in the *Athenæum* that the papers in question, revised, and added to, were to be published by Messrs. Macmillan. I was indeed hoist with my own petard!

The first result was that my history was abandoned. The publishers told me frankly, and quite reasonably, that Mr. Hunt's re-publication would certainly "take the wind out of my sails," and rather than go on with the agreement they paid me a small sum for the work already done on the book, and we tore up our contract. I expected with considerable interest the publication of Mr. Hunt's book, which Messrs. Macmillan had announced as to appear "shortly." The autumn came and passed, the weeks, the months, the years rolled by, picture after picture grew steadily to completion under Mr. Hunt's skilful hands, but the Chronicle of pre-Raphaelitism, though six years have since passed, remains an unpublished chronicle still.

Life is short, and I have waited long enough for my pre-Raphaelite brother, and have therefore decided to include in the present volume some of the material I once collected for the use of my book. I bear no grudge against Mr. Hunt; no doubt he thought he was acting within his right, in the first place; and in the second, his long delay was—well—to be expected! And I have not the slightest desire to make out a case for myself as an aggrieved person. But I think it necessary, for the sake of my own credit, that the public should know I am not, even in the few quotations inserted from the papers in question, using another man's brains in availing myself of work which I originally projected, carefully edited, corrected, and wrote no small portion of with my own hand. To this I have only to add that I have indicated wherever this paper is quoted.

The more important, and hitherto unpublished, reminiscences obtained from Mr. Ford Madox Brown are also shown, as are the few notes given me by Mr. Woolner, R.A.¹ The first of these were told me by the artist himself, chiefly in reply to questions, and were taken down on the spot by my shorthand secretary. Mr. Brown was, during the whole time of our conversation, painting on the frescoes of the Manchester Town Hall, and subject to continual interruption; I must here express my great obligation to him for the kindness with which he gave me all the information

¹ Since writing this article, Mr. Woolner has died. It is too late for me to make any alterations in the text, so if any expressions occur therein which may seem inappropriate at the present time, I hope the above fact will be borne in mind.—*October 10th, 1892.*

in his power—information of specially valuable character, as will be seen hereafter.

The story of the pre-Raphaelite movement is the story of four great artists and generous-minded enthusiastic men. It is the story, too, of enthusiastic effort in the cause of art: and in connection with such effort it may almost be said that there can be no such word as failure. Certainly, in this case, though the Brotherhood lasted but a very short while even in name, though its members were few, and, with exception of the leaders, undistinguished and ineffective; though the founders themselves were very quickly separated in aim, and very partially true to their professed principles: the movement so inaugurated has had permanent and most enlivening influence upon all contemporary English painting. Opponents of the theory, if theory be not too large a word for the somewhat contradictory principles and practice of these P.R.B. painters, have nevertheless been led to modify their practice in view of the results attained by their opponents—all unconsciously much of the spirit of pre-Raphaelitism has crept into Academic work, and even where the form of this latter has remained unchanged, the traditional practice has, as it were, been supplemented and informed by greater intellectual consistency, more intelligent and thorough study of accessories and probabilities, and an attention to detail which was unknown before 1848.

It would be an interesting task to show how far this change is due to the influence we are considering, and how it has been affected by the spirit of French art, which has also undergone a complete revolution during the same period. The Barbizon School, the School of Idyllism in Landscape, the "*plein air*" school, the "Impressionists," are all, like the celebrated person who spoke prose without knowing it, unconsciously to themselves pre-Raphaelite workers: men who are seeking for truths of nature and emotion for themselves instead of in traditional fashion. But this would lead me too far in the present instance, and could hardly be made clearly intelligible to the reader without an elaborate series of illustrations from the pictures of the French painters.

In the following pages there will not be found (to the best of my belief) any allusion to facts and occurrences, the relation of which would give pain either to the pre-Raphaelite painters or their friends and relatives. I have written neither as an advocate nor an opponent, but by the relation of plain facts, have endeavoured to dispel some of the misapprehensions which have become current on the subject, and to consider the practice of these painters in relation to their personality as well as to their supposed theories. A good deal of very eloquent and high-strung rubbish has been written about the pre-

Raphaelite movement, and the instigators of the revolt have been credited with many wonderful aims and theories of which they were most innocently ignorant: but in truth they were very like other brilliant young men in their *sturm und drang* period, and had few theories which they did not abandon, or aims which they did not forsake.

It is very difficult at the present time to arrive at the actual *raison d'être* of the P.R.B., as it was called by its members; for, whatever was the aim, it was soon abandoned, and the members of the association went thenceforward on separate and individual lines. The one principle which, however, was at first their ruling one, was that of painting each subject from one model, and if the picture was of such a kind as to need a landscape background, making a separate and original study for that picture as far as possible *under the conditions of light which the subject required*. Millais especially was most particular on this point, and it was partly Madox Brown's dis-sension about the single personality of the model which prevented the latter from associating himself nominally with the P.R.B. Even this principle, however, was soon abandoned by the majority of the members, though not before some very fine results had been produced, such as the orchard in "The Light of the World," the mossy red-brick wall of "The Huguenot," and the lovely landscape backgrounds of the "Autumn Leaves" and the "Ophelia." In connection with this theory of seeking for an actual physical environment for the drama of their pictures, there was the endeavour, so finely characterised and insisted upon some years after this period by John Ruskin, of representing that action in terms of actual thought and emotion, rather than in conventionally artistic manner: to show a scene as it was or might have been, instead of as it might prettily or gracefully be arranged. Very possibly this idea dictated the choice of name. Seeing in the prints and casts from the Italian pre-Raphaelite painters and sculptors the desire for expression rather than the desire for artistic perfection, these young men may have jumped to the conclusion, illogical, but not wholly unreasonable, that there was a necessary connection between the simplicity of form in the earlier work, and its intensity of meaning, and thence reasoned that if they could only throw overboard all the later artistic traditions, they might be able to embody in modern work the simplicity, directness, and appeal of early Italian painting. The probability is, however, that their theory was less profound, less conscious, at all events until Ruskin gave expression thereto in his famous essay. The truth is that at this time, not only in England, but in Germany, in France, and even in Italy, an analogous influence to the pre-Raphaelite practice was springing up in all directions. A wave of tradition-questioning was sweeping over the world of art, as over that of science and religion: the study of nature and natural fact was

advancing by leaps and bounds: conventionalities were for the moment forgotten: the times were ripe for change.

And at this happy conjunction of things the pre-Raphaelite practice shaped itself, little by theory, much by instinct and sympathy, and borrowing here and there the form of ancient art, leaped forth to point the way to the art of the future.

Had the leaders only been true to themselves, had they been more fortunate in their partners and disciples, and less bitterly attacked and injudiciously applauded, there might have grown up in England from this movement the most magnificent art of modern times, for never before, and certainly never since, had so bold, and, on the whole, so successful an attempt been made to weave together in one strand of meaning and beauty the loveliness of the outside world and the emotions and interests of humanity. Moreover, the root idea of all fine art, the search for perfection, was here of the very essence of the aim, and, while maintained, gave dignity and interest even to the least successful example: set free the genius of these young painters from all hindering circumstance; and started them for a new world of beauty, where there should be, as Emerson said—

“Neither great nor small
To the soul which maketh all;
For where it cometh all things are,
And it cometh everywhere.”

This was not to be—Ruskin, informed and urged by Coventry Patmore, saw the intellectual and artistic possibilities of the movement, and gave them expression in those letters to the *Times* which remain to this day as models of passionate special pleading; but his heart and head were full of other work, and at the critical moment he left England for Switzerland and Italy; and though he never altogether withdrew his sympathy from the art, he in after years ceased to hold any communication with Rossetti or Millais, and little with Holman Hunt. The press critics and the Royal Academicians made short work of the pre-Raphaelites—short work in the sense of derision and abuse. The latter skied or rejected most pre-Raphaelite pictures, the former laughed at or abused them according to the humour of the moment. I can myself call to mind the utter scorn and blame which were showered upon such pictures as Mr. Burne-Jones's "Seasons," "Love amongst the Ruins," "Night and Morning," when they were exhibited at the "Old Society" and the Dudley Gallery, and this was at least ten or twelve years after the date of which I am speaking, and I also remember well the day the committee of the Water-Colour Society themselves took down Mr. Burne-Jones's picture of "Phyllis and Demophoon," because one of their patrons had declared its nudity to be shameful.

On this occasion both the painter and the President, Mr. (now Sir Frederick) Burton, resigned.

But to return to these earlier days, it has been said that the P.R.B. were not true to themselves or each other: the fact seems to be that after the first early years of their associateship, though the old friendship remained unimpaired, all consonance of aim had entirely disappeared. This can hardly be properly understood without some consideration of the different temperaments and ambitions of the three leaders, Rossetti, Holman Hunt, and Millais. But before doing this I must show clearly, by the consideration of Madox Brown's own painting, and the record of his own words, how irresistible is the evidence that he was in all but name the real founder and leader of the pre-Raphaelite movement: the INSPIRER AS WELL AS THE TEACHER of Rossetti and Holman Hunt; and how unnecessary it is to go back to Ghiberti gates and Orcagna and Mantegna frescoes for the theory of truth to nature, simplicity, and reality which this master had already grasped in his foreign studenthood, and was actually exemplifying in his pictures before Rossetti and Millais had left the Royal Academy schools, or Holman Hunt had entered them! In doing this I ask my readers' patience to allow me first to say a few words about Madox Brown himself—and to believe that they are written in no spirit of partizanship or friendly exaggeration. My words can be proved to be true by any one who will take the trouble to examine the evidence for them, who will examine for himself Brown's pictures, or will even consider carefully the reproductions of them which I have given in the quarto edition of this book.

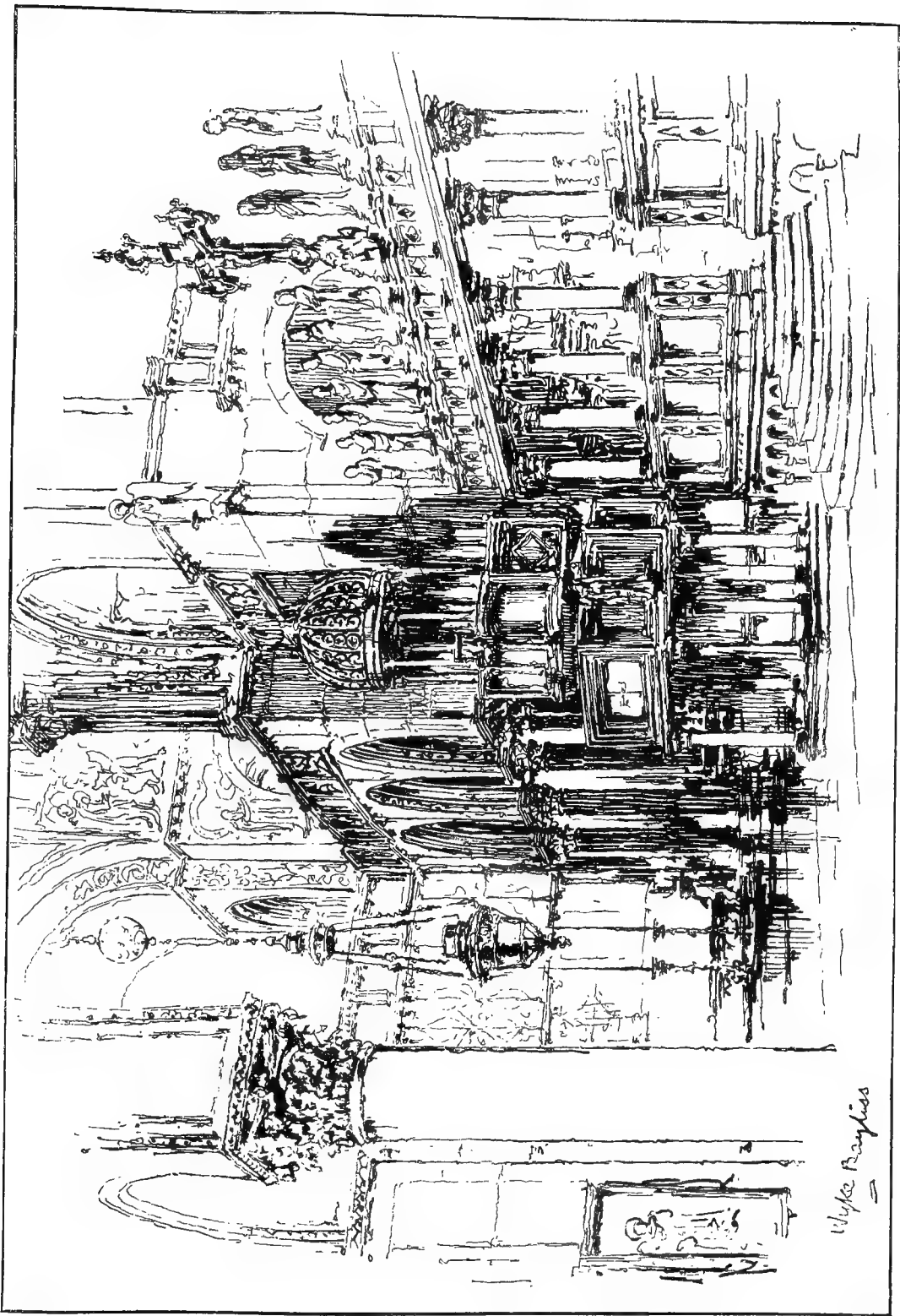
II.—FORD MADOX BROWN: THE TEACHER OF DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AND HOLMAN HUNT.

“One of the finest colourists living.”—*D. G. Rossetti or Madox Brown.*



HERE are more things in London town than are dreamt of in our philosophy, and here is one of them. Within three miles of the Royal Academy there still lives and paints one of our greatest artists; who is the true founder of the movement usually called pre-Raphaelite, and the teacher of Holman Hunt and Rossetti, the man whose genius the former “silently recognised” nearly half a century ago, and of whom Rossetti spoke as above only three years before his death. In a small house on the side of Primrose Hill, without a studio save his sitting-room, without recognition from the public, the press, or the Academy authorities, in but indifferent health, and with narrow if not failing income, this great man lives, who for half a century has given the public work of absolutely unique quality, original, thoughtful, industrious, and beautiful. He lives there, poor, brave, and patient still, encompassed, I yet am glad to think, with the love and respect of a few true-hearted friends, and carrying out to the last the doctrines which he has shown alike in his painting and his life, of thorough work, independence, and honesty. In the mad competition for wealth and notoriety which surges round him, in the ingenuities of advertisement and the duplicities of commerce, he has, and has ever had, no part; above all has he lacked the will to conciliate or truckle to the powers that be: he has dared to live his honourable, kindly, industrious life after his own fashion, in truth and honour.

Is it desirable, is it decent, is it tolerable, that such a noble servant to art and England should be so neglected and forgotten! We pension our Under-Secretaries of State after five years' service, our soldiers after five-and-twenty—might we not pension our artists when they have worked for us fifty years! Pension I mean in the manner that



ST. MARK'S, VENICE

WAKE BAYLISS. P. R. B. A.

From the original drawing in the possession of the author

they would most desire ; pension them with a smile, a few kind words, perhaps even a " Well done, thou good and faithful servant ! " I don't feel at all clear that Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen might not as well " shake hands " with Madox Brown as with an aged negress from South Carolina ; or, if knighthood still may be taken to have its olden significance, there are few workers in England who would better deserve and dignify such honour.

Believe me, for once, readers who care for justice and gratitude, I am not speaking rashly, or without warrant : these words are *not* exaggerated, are *not* the result of friendship or ignorance. These facts are true, as they are pathetic, as they are intolerable. This artist is a splendid one even now, when ill-health and great age have perhaps somewhat lessened the cunning of his hand and the keenness of his eye, and when long-continued neglect and misunderstanding have saddened the spirit which they had no power to sour.

I challenge any reader of this book to look at the pictures herein¹ which I shall presently describe, of " Work," " The Last of England," " Cordelia's Portion," and " Cromwell at St. Ives," and not confess that in every one of them is shown not only technical power and knowledge of the most disciplined and *extended* kind, but a dignity of intellectual aim, a purity of sentiment, and a breadth of conception such as we cannot parallel in any other single English artist now alive.

Knowing that this is so, and knowing too that half a century ago some of the greatest artists living thought Madox Brown's cartoons for the frescoes in the House of Lords the finest in the whole competition ; and that since then he has spent fifteen years at little more than journeyman's wages in painting the frescoes of the Manchester Town Hall, I say once more emphatically, here is one unjustly neglected who deserves well of the nation. " Who is on my side ? who will help the good cause of gratitude and justice ? "

The cause might be helped, might be won so easily, if only—it is a big *if*, I know—the press, metropolitan and provincial, would take it up.

One article in each newspaper in England, and the thing would be done. Think of it, editors who yourselves so often work for years without recognition or reward ! think of it, brother journalists who fling your brains into the gutter weekly or daily to gain a house-painter's wages ! think of it, artists, and critics, and the great widespread race of occasional correspondents, and for once let us unite to thank a great artist and a brave man for the pictures he has painted, and the example he has set !

¹ Quarto Edition.

This is not a Jan Van Beers, whose pictures are in Bond Street, and whose heart is in the Quartier Bréda; nor a Solomon J. Solomon newly escaped from the Salon Ménagerie. This is not a painter of babies' frocks, big-hatted young ladies in villa gardens, Chippendale interiors, Venetian alleys, Scotch mists, or Newlyn fishwives; but he is a painter who has pierced to the heart of deep emotions, and conceived the very aspect of great deeds, who has brought history home to our perceptions as a reality, who has preached to us in simple manly fashion of the dignity of labour, the consolations of love, the fury of jealousy, the triumph and the tragedy of conquest, the most vital incidents of our nation and our life.

I do not ask, nor wish, for my friend the reward of money, which I know to-day is not given to unfashionable art. Give him only that which is so clearly his due, the reward of esteem and honour. Leave him in his studio-less house with the few who love him, and who will give to his personal life all it needs of comfort and affection—but publicly, is it not possible that, with all our South Kensingtons, our Guildhalls, our Academies, our National Galleries, our Luxembourgs, and in fact with all our apparatus for making art *progress*—whither?—we might do something to show that we know—even though late—a great man when we have got him, and are not above manifesting to him our knowledge and our praise?

I hope very earnestly that the above words may have some little fruit: perhaps that would have been more likely had they been written with less apparent vehemence: the *tone* is, I fear, as the Home Secretary wrote to the Rev. Francis Eden,¹ "intemperate, out of place, and WITHOUT PRECEDENT."

Let me now try to show how far my words are justified by Brown's pictures.

The historical ones I must dismiss very briefly, for space would fail me to discuss them adequately. They range from the "Wilhelmus Conquestator," originally executed in Paris in 1844 (!), and exhibited at the Westminster Hall competition, when it was called "Harold," to the "Cromwell," passing by the way "Chaucer at the Court of Edward III.," "Wycliffe reading his Translation of the Bible to John of Gaunt," "King René's Honeymoon," and the whole series of Manchester frescoes, of which the first is of the building of Manchester by the Romans, and the last brings the history of the city down to our own time. Allied to these historical works are the religious pictures, and the semi-historical scenes from Shakespeare, the *Mort d'Arthur*, and Byron: of one of these, the "Cordelia's

¹ Pardon for quoting an almost more unfashionable author than Brown is an artist, Charles Reade.

Portion," I give here (in my quarto edition) an autotype reproduction. Besides these, there are many elaborate designs for stained glass, nearly all of which are of historical, religious, or legendary subjects, and were executed while Brown was a member of the Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, and Company firm, of which it is not generally known that Burne-Jones was also a partner. The greater part of the stained glass (which was the most important section of the business in early days) was executed by Madox Brown and Burne-Jones—the work of the latter being as magnificent as any he has ever executed, but somewhat transcending the limits of the material. These last were thoroughly understood and appreciated in Brown's work, and the artist's little note¹ as to the right use of the material is so entirely just and enlightening, that I quote it herewith:—

"With its heavy lead-lines, surrounding every part (and no stained glass can be rational or good art, without strong lead-lines), stained glass does not admit of refined drawing; or else it is thrown away upon it. What it does admit of, and above all things imperatively requires, is, fine colour; and what it *can* admit of, and does very much require also, is *invention, expression, and good dramatic action*. For this reason, work by the greatest historical artists is not thrown away upon stained-glass windows, because though high finish of execution is superfluous and against the spirit of this beautiful decorative art, yet, as expression and action can be conveyed in a few strokes equally as in the most elaborate art, on this side therefore, stained glass rises again to the epic height."

No less than two hundred cartoons for this class of work Brown told me a few days since he had in "a big box there."

The modern section of our artist's painting comprises his best-known pictures, a good many portraits, nearly all treated pictorially, and a great quantity of pencil and chalk studies. In the last-mentioned medium especially the work is of rare excellence, and I know few more quietly and securely beautiful things in modern art than the chalk portrait of the painter's wife. Two of these modern pictures are, I believe, the most perfect examples of the complete realisation of an imaginative conception which the world has ever seen: they are essentially pre-Raphaelite in the sense which Ruskin understood the word; and I am proud to be able to add that though London practically rejected them, both are in public permanent galleries—one at Birmingham and the other at Liverpool.² These are "The Last of England" and "Work."

"The Last of England" is, according to the painter, in the

¹ In the catalogue of his exhibition, 1865.

² Both reproduced in the quarto edition.

strictest sense historical. It treats of the great emigration movement which reached its culminating point in 1852; but I do not think that, in the future years, men will think most of the history of the subject. Surely I need not describe the incident of the picture: a weak and broken-down husband, his face full of brooding passion, leaving the land where hope and health and fortune have alike failed him. A young and beautiful wife holding his hand in consolation and support, while half seen beneath her shawl a tiny hand in its turn clasps hers with the unconscious trust which is to be her future recompense—in the background the rout of steerage passengers, the hurrying sailors, the tug casting off, and the chalk cliffs of England growing faint in the distance. He, in Saul's darkest hour; she, with sorrow too deep for tears, but not for trust and hope—for "the circle of her love moves with her." Such is the circumstance of the picture. I am glad to think it is not so easy—is, indeed, scarcely possible—to set down any adequate record of its beauty and its power. To the present writer, at all events, there is no modern picture which in expressional interest and insight can be considered as equal to this; and there is only one, "The Huguenot" of Sir John Millais, which can equal the beauty of the woman's face, with the lovely features shadowed but not distorted with unselfish grief, and unflinching trust and love. I may perhaps be pardoned for pointing out that, leaving these emotional realities on one side, the conception of the artist has not arrested itself at the expression of the dramatic and personal feeling of his subject, but has worked out in fullest detail and accurate subordination the various accidents of the scene—and in inserting each of these has chosen his detail in obedience to a clear intellectual purpose. Let us hear what was the artist's own point of view and description of how the picture was painted—

"This picture, begun in 1852, was finished more than nine years ago (i.e. in 1856). To ensure the peculiar look of light all round, which objects have on a dull day at sea, it was painted for the most part in the open air on dull days, and when the flesh was being painted, on cold days. Absolutely without regard to the art of any period or country, I have tried to render this scene as it would appear. The minuteness of detail which would be visible under such conditions of broad daylight, I have thought necessary to imitate, as bringing the pathos of the subject more home to the beholder."

- I will not enter here upon any actual description of the second picture, "Work": the finest pure pre-Raphaelite picture in the world, as it appears to me. It hangs in the Corporation Gallery at Liverpool, "plain for all folk to see"; in colour a cut-open jewel; in meaning a sermon and a hymn of praise; in conception the offspring of a big brain; in execution the product of a master's hand. The

magnificence of gesture alone in the main group of workmen—the navvies—stamps the composition as the work of a great artist ; and its multiplicity of incident and meaning, the elaboration of the composition, the novelty of the subject, and the completion, intellectual and artistic, of its rendering, are all entirely admirable.

This is one of the great pictures of the modern world ; a record which will never be surpassed of certain facts significant to the well-being of our country and civilisation, and giving warning of certain dangers which lie in wait for us in the future. The "Cordelia's Portion," beautiful as it is in composition and in the expression in the faces of Cordelia and Lear, must rank below these last-mentioned pictures, if only because of dealing with a subject of less interest—less vital humanity. In this work the artist is illustrator only—not illustrator and poet—another has supplied the conception, he only the arrangement. There is also visible in this picture one defect, the only serious one I know in Madox Brown's art, and that is an unconscious admission—nay, it seems a preference for awkwardness of gesture, amounting occasionally almost to ugliness. In nearly every instance of this which I have noticed in Brown's work, the strained, or cramped, or exaggerated gesture appears to have been deliberately adopted rather than sacrifice an iota of the dramatic or intellectual meaning of the composition, and in this I think that the artist has on several occasions been decidedly in error. Perhaps the most marked instance is to be found in the picture of "Romeo and Juliet," where Romeo, still clasping Juliet with one arm, has the other stiffly extended in an absolutely horizontal line, which gives him the appearance of a semaphore rather than a human being. No doubt the suggestion that he "wants to be off," to keep his intention in the vernacular, is thereby indicated vigorously, but the gain in meaning does not compensate for the uncouthness of gesture. However, where so much is given us, we may well excuse an occasional drawback of this kind : we find the equivalent in the work of every great artist—each has some special shortcoming, in form, in colour, in manliness, in meaning, in brushwork, in subject, in carelessness, in insolence, in industry, or in feeling.

I am writing of a *great* artist, not of a *perfect* one ; there are no perfect artists, nor ever were ; and when a painter of to-day combines high aim, deep feeling, dramatic intensity, fine draughtsmanship, splendid colour, an unrivalled power of composition, and great intellectual power, we can tolerate some personal prepossessions which we might otherwise condemn. The truth is, that Brown never entirely shook himself free of the Gothic training he received at Antwerp under Baron Wappers ; the same element is to be found in the work of Baron Leys, which was in great vogue at Antwerp at the time of Brown's studentship. Antwerp was then, as it is now,

perhaps the strongest art school in Europe in the study of chiar-oscuro, and there the influence of the Spanish and Flemish Schools is mainly predominant—to use Brown's own words, "I had a mixed impression, but Rembrandt towered over all." His stay in Rome completed the impression, by showing him, as it were, the reverse of the medal; and manifesting the practice of painters, the foundation of whose art was light and colour, instead of light and shadow; harmony instead of contrast. Before his stay in Rome, Madox Brown went to Paris, and there the first true germ of the pre-Raphaelite movement sprang into life in the determination taken by this young painter to make his pictures "real." Here are his actual words: "In Paris I first formed my idea of making my pictures real, because no French artist at that time did so. Meissonier was then only just beginning" (beginning to be known, Brown must have meant, as of course he had been painting for several years, and was indeed doing some of his finest work). "They (the French painters) had nothing new in light and shadow. The idea was my own. I walked about Paris with Casey and talked it over; then my wife became ill, and I came back with an idea already made out. John Marshall's sketch was painted in Rome. Then I began the 'Wycliffe reading his Bible'; this was the first thing in the Italian School." And this was also the first essentially pre-Raphaelite English picture. It was sold by the artist to Mr. M. Wilkinson, a banker, and within the past year it came to the hammer at Christie's. This work was succeeded by the only picture which Mr. Madox Brown considers to have been painted by him implicitly in the pre-Raphaelite style, "Pretty Baa-Lambs." Critics said there was a deep symbolical meaning in the picture; the lambs, they said, meant Christ; but it would be a pity if pictures were painted of little girls standing on their toes with their heads out of joint. These criticisms appeared in the *Morning Star*, of which Mr. Edmund Yates was then Art critic.

Shortly after this, Rossetti, seeing Madox Brown's "Harold" at Westminster Hall, came to him and asked for admission to his studio as a pupil. This was granted, as I have said above, and the greater part of the following chapter treats of this student period, and the intercourse of Brown and Rossetti.



A WOMAN WITH GRAPES.— D. G. ROSSETTI

III.—DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI AS STUDENT AND FRIEND.



ROSSETTI was at once the strongest and the weakest member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Strongest in the splendid individuality of his artistic genius (whether in poetry or painting), and strongest in intellectual insight and spiritual influence ; but weakest in self-restraint, in sensitiveness, and, if the truth must be told, in self-indulgence. A generous, morbid, passionate, hyper-sensitive nature, intensely beloved by his friends, whom yet he would treat, when the whim took him, with utter indifference ; very prone to suspicion and anger, and utterly reckless in his judgments on others, but gifted with such power of will, such personal charm, such generosity of impulse, and such brilliance of intellectual insight and artistic perception, that, in the eyes of his friends and admirers, all shortcoming was atoned for or forgotten. Very amusing is Brown's account of the way in which Rossetti's lessons used to be received by the pupil, and very characteristic the behaviour of Rossetti, and the matter-of-fact way in which his master treated him—setting him down to still-life groups, in which “an old tobacco canister figured as one of the chief objects. Rossetti was most impatient of this work. He used to clean his palette on sheets of notepaper, and leave them lying about on the floor, and they would very often stick to my boots when I came in in the dark.”

Here is, *sans phrases*, the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and the source of the inspiration of its chief member—an impatient pupil fuming at the representation of a tobacco canister, and littering the studio with palette scrapings which stick to his master's boots !

And take another, a little anecdote told me by Brown which shows alike Rossetti's impatience and his exacting nature in trifles.

“ He had no objection to drapery on lay figures, as is generally supposed. On the contrary, so far from hating lay figures, he had two or three very expensively got-up ones, and also a very expensive thing like a sentry-box in which to place them. And he would have his place arranged on such occasions as if it were a State affair, or as if Gladstone were expected to arrive. He was, indeed, fond of purchasing anything expensive simply because it was expensive. One day he came into my studio, where I had a lay figure set all ready, and walked towards it, whereupon I exclaimed, ‘Gabriel, don’t go near that,’ and he shouted, ‘Good God Almighty, how can I remember this? I have a box made for my figures, and my friends can walk about without touching them.’ ”

This sort of spirit seems to have run throughout his life : he could not understand that other people should not do as he did, and if they did not, he was angry as frankly as a child would be. There was, it seems to me, much more of the Italian than the English nationality in him, and his moments of excitement, his fits of depression, his mad pranks, and madder suspicions, the nature of his intellect, his queer mixture of business capacity and utter childishness, his moral contradictions, were all such as are common enough in Italy, but rarely met with in our own country. Italians are at once, as far as the experience of the present writer goes, the most sentimental and the most practical men in the world ; children in feeling, and as shrewd as a Yankee speculator in business matters. With all his eccentricity there were few better men of business in the artist world than Rossetti, and though he treated the purchasers of his pictures with scant courtesy, he rarely lost a commission thereby.

Here is a characteristic anecdote of his later period in this connection. George Rae is a fine judge of art, and a banker at Birkenhead, and was from the first an admirer and purchaser of Rossetti’s work, but on one occasion Rossetti asked him more than he wished to give for a picture (“The Bride”). Rae went away and came back in a few days afterwards, when Rossetti greeted him sarcastically, “Why, I thought you were on your way back to Birkenhead.” Rae asked him what he wanted for the picture, and Rossetti said 300 guineas! “Why,” said Rae, “you offered it me for £250!” “I really do not remember,” said Rossetti ; “perhaps I did ; but why the devil didn’t you take it when I offered it you? Well, then, you have me ; you can have it for 300 *pounds*. If the odd shillings are of any use to you, Rae,” he said in a most lordly style, “you are welcome to them.” This, says Madox Brown, was essentially Rossetti’s nature in dealing with a banker—and, indeed, other folks beside bankers were apt to be treated according to the whim of the moment. I asked Madox

Brown once whether he did not think that Rossetti's friends made a mistake in putting up with so much from him, and whether his sensitiveness and morbid feeling were increased by their tolerance. But he seemed to think that this was not so, especially in the earlier years of his life: he "always had a lot of sycophants, but they did it from a good feeling, and not from any hope of gain to themselves. I think, too, it was really a case of mutual flattery." Perhaps the most curious contradictions of Rossetti's character were in the matter of money; he was utterly extravagant in the purchase of whatever took his fancy, and yet would hesitate and bargain about the most necessary expenditure. In the same way with his pictures, he would at one moment talk as if art were degraded by the most distant reference to its commercial value, and at another would write or speak as if that value were his primary object. Hear him on the subject of some gamekeeper's daughter, whom he has never seen.

"By the bye, he tells me, from your information, that there is a British beauty on hand in the shape of a gamekeeper's daughter. Do you think one could ask her to sit for her portrait in chalk? I daresay I could brush off fifty guineas' worth of her at a sitting or two, and would give her a sketch of herself besides. But ought one to ask?"¹

And again, a few weeks later, apparently with reference to the same model.

"Sophy Burgess' head I have sold already for fifty guineas, so trade has not been quite at a standstill. I think when I finish S—— I shall give him a nimbus and call him his Redeemer; by which title he may be made to pay. This sounds base, I perceive, on reading it over."

The truth is that, even to his art, Rossetti's attitude of mind was incalculable and inconsistent; at one time reverencing it as a religion, at another seeing in it only a means of livelihood to be resorted to when money was desirable. His hours of work, too, were equally fitful. On occasion he would paint without intermission for several days, and then do nothing for a week: fits of energy and idleness succeeding one another suddenly. As he once wrote to a friend, he "was an inveterate Southerner," and did "not know what was to be got out of the North save rheumatism, and a habit of swearing." The last he certainly acquired to great perfection.

His best drawings he was very loath to part with, valuing them even more highly than his pictures; and on the whole with justice, for they are equally beautiful, and superior in some technical qualities. Coloured chalk has never been used with greater subtlety or delicacy than in

¹ Letter to Madame Bodichon

some of these ; but his actual painting (brushwork) is, in all but his very finest period, uncertain and tentative.

There is considerable reason to believe that Rossetti felt this incompleteness himself, for in the later years of his life he was very fond of retouching the earlier pictures, and in several cases by no means to their advantage. From the beginning he was very fond of starting pictures, very impatient of continuing, very loath to finish them. During the time of the Newnan Street Studio, Brown tells me that he began twelve pictures one after another, none of which were finished.

“ He, Rossetti, came down to my house at Finchley one day very cold and wet, and went into the kitchen. He was evidently greatly depressed, and said to me, ‘ I cannot paint ; I can write a sonnet, but I cannot paint. It is a delusion one gets into one’s head. Millais, Hunt, you, can paint, but I can’t.’ I said, ‘ Oh nonsense, you must try and rouse yourself ; this is your twelfth picture, and unless you break the spell you will never do anything in your life.’ He gave a sort of laugh—he was in a frightful state of depression—and called himself a fool. After that he painted some water-colour sketches, and found he could finish them without much difficulty.”

The following anecdote of Rossetti refers to this early period when he was working in Madox Brown’s studio. I give as usual in the latter painter’s own words.

“ He had a most beastly bit of alpaca for the drapery of his lay figure, which would not make folds nor sit properly. He had worked at this for a whole week, and it seemed to me that he would go mad. I told him to leave it alone, that that piece of alpaca would never make proper folds. He exclaimed, ‘ God Almighty, what am I to do ? it is the colour, it must do ; I cannot get anything else.’ It finished in this way—he got a little china palette and stuck this upon his easel, and then sat upon the ground with his drawing-board, leaning against the easel, when down came the whole lot, and the china palette breaking, cut his hands. ‘ This has ended it all,’ he cried out ; ‘ I shall have lock-jaw, and a very good thing too. I have had quite enough of this work.’ I said, ‘ Nonsense, Gabriel, people don’t have lock-jaw simply because they cut their thumbs.’ ‘ If people cut their thumbs,’ he said, ‘ they always have lock-jaw : well, I am glad, I shall never touch this picture again,’ and he never did.”

There is rather a misconception prevalent as to the prices fetched by Rossetti’s early work. From the first these were by no means indif-

ferent, especially when we remember that forty years since prices were altogether lower than of late. I can remember well that as late as the "Bicknell" sale (somewhere about 1861), the highest price which a water-colour painting had ever been sold for at a public auction was £630: this was impressed upon my memory from the fact of my father having purchased the work, which was the Rievaulx Abbey of Copley Fielding. Some fifteen years later also, at Christie's, this picture realised nearly 2000 guineas, and fine water-colours generally had during that period more than doubled in value.

Rossetti's usual price at this time for a water-colour sketch was between twelve and twenty-five guineas, and a good many of these were taken by Ruskin at that price: they were always a small size. He used to do them in about a fortnight without models (alas! for P.R.B. theories). Sometimes, however, he would have models, and then it was an affair of six months or so. One of these twelve-guinea sketches has since been sold by auction for £430.

This period—about 1852—was the hardest, financially speaking, of Rossetti's life. He had just then a persistent run of ill-luck—one thing coming after another—and he had not yet settled what it was he wanted to do in art: he was finding himself. His landlord swindled him; Ruskin (who had at first helped him), to use Madox Brown's express words, "funked it and hooked it" to Switzerland, and a dealer who had given him a large commission failed. This picture was never finished, but was repainted in later years.

Of all Rossetti's paintings, it is the only one with which I am acquainted which deals realistically with a scene of modern life, and I cannot help thinking that either the scene or its treatment must have been suggested by Holman Hunt. In any case "Found" forms a perfect sequel to "The Awakening Conscience" of the last-mentioned artist. The origin of the composition was a ballad entitled "Rosabell"—a ballad by W. B. Scott, a painter and poet, and warm sympathiser with the P.R.B. This was about 1858 (according to Madox Brown), about ten years after the founding of the Brotherhood.

I have given a short description of this picture in a subsequent chapter, which deals more especially with the characteristics of Rossetti's art; suffice it to say here that the "unfortunate calf," referred to below by Mr. Madox Brown, played an important though subsidiary part in the tragic story of the picture. The reproduction here inserted is from a pen-and-ink drawing in the collection of Mr. Fairfax Murray, and it is to be noted that the face of the countryman is different from that of the oil-picture, and far finer in expression. There seems to be no doubt that the original picture was left unfinished till

1882, and was then taken up again, slightly altered, and considerably injured in repainting. It was a passion with Rossetti in later years to retouch his earlier compositions, and I am assured by a large collector of his paintings that several in his possession were almost entirely spoilt by being lent the painter for that purpose.

But to return to "Found."

"Rossetti painted several of these sketches (the water-colours above alluded to) in my house at the same time he was going on with that unfortunate calf. He was six weeks on that calf in a miserable farmyard. The calf was three days old when he commenced, and when he ended the calf used to jump into its own cart, and put itself into position.

"The farmer was very kind; and lent him the cart and other things he wanted. He used to stand in the yard in a lot of muck and slush, and I thought he was certain to catch a fever of some sort. He never began to paint till one, and left off about four, because of the light."

Before continuing with these reminiscences, let us see what manner of man Rossetti was at this time in outward appearance; at all events, in the eyes of his intimate friend Holman Hunt:—

"Imagine a young man of decidedly foreign aspect, about 5 feet $7\frac{1}{4}$ in height, with long brown hair touching his shoulders, not taking care to walk erect, but rolling carelessly as he slouched along, pouting with parted lips, staring with dreaming eyes—the pupils not reaching the bottom lids—grey eyes, not looking directly at any point, but gazing listlessly about; the openings large and oval, the lower orbits dark-coloured. His nose was aquiline but delicate, with a depression from the frontal sinus shaping the bridge; the nostrils full, the brow rounded and prominent; and the line of the jaw angular and marked, while still uncovered with beard. His shoulders were not square, but yet fairly masculine in shape. The singularity of gait depended upon the width of hip, which was unusual. Altogether, he was a lightly-built man, with delicate hands and feet; although neither weak nor fragile in constitution, he was nevertheless altogether unaffected by any athletic exercises. He was careless in his dress, which then was, as usual with professional men, black and of evening cut. So superior was he to the ordinary vanities of young men that he would allow the spots of mud to remain dry on his legs for several days. His overcoat was brown, and not put on with ordinary attention; and with his pushing stride and loud voice, a special scrutiny would have been needed to discern the reserved tenderness that dwelt in

the breast of the apparently careless and defiant youth. But any one who approached and addressed him was struck with sudden surprise to find all his critical impressions dissipated in a moment; for the language of the painter was refined and polished, and he proved to be courteous, gentle, and winsome, generous in compliment, rich in interest in the pursuit of others, and in every respect, as far as could be shown by manner, a cultivated gentleman. (I hate the word in its canting sense, but here in its least presumptuous significance it has a meaning which no other word would so accurately convey.) To one who lived with him he showed an inexhaustible store of accomplishments, yet from his uncontrollable temper under the trials of studio work, it was clear that he had been a spoilt child."

"First, to complete the picture of Rossetti, I should say that frequently he would leave his day's appointed task to engage himself with some design or poem that occupied his thoughts. When he had once sat down and was immersed in the effort to express his purpose, and the difficulties had to be wrestled with, his tongue was hushed, he remained fixed and inattentive to all that went on about him; he rocked himself to and fro, and at times he moaned lowly, or hummed for a brief minute, as though telling off some idea. All this while he peered intently before him, looking hungry and eager, and passing by in his regard any who came before him, as if not seen at all. Then he would often get up and walk out of the room without saying a word. Years afterwards, when he became stout, and men, with a good deal of reason, found a resemblance in him to the bust of Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, and still later, when he had outgrown this resemblance, it seemed to me that it was in his early days only that the soul within had been truly seen in his face. In these early days, with all his headstrongness and a certain want of consideration, his life within was untainted to an exemplary degree, and he worthily rejoiced in the poetic atmosphere of the sacred and spiritual dreams that then encircled him, however some of his noisy demonstrations at the time might hinder this from being recognised by a hasty judgment."

Thus we obtain in Madox Brown's recollections of his friend, and from Hunt's description, a tolerably clear presentment of Rossetti's personality, which is borne out by all I have learned from other sources. We see before us an impetuous, generous, enthusiastic man, richly endowed with genius and almost irresistibly attractive to his friends; we see too a glimpse of the reverse side of the medal, of his feverish energy, his impatience of restraint, his easy discouragement, his fits of depression, his uncontrollable temper. Such is the

stuff of which in every age of the world the "Seer," the Prophet, has been made; he who, at once less and greater than those amongst whom he lives, demands alike their faith and their toleration, their admiration and their pity, their obedience and their help. And these were given to Rossetti without stint or murmur, and he took them and played with them, or cast them aside as the whim of the moment dictated, no one questioning his right. I don't know that there is anything more touching or interesting in this whole story than the tacit and unconscious testimony borne by Mr. Madox Brown and Mr. Holman Hunt of their "care" for their friend: of the way in which they strove to give him just the help he needed—to raise his spirits, to forward his art, to make him work. Take as an example of this an incident in the story of the "Beata Beatrix," a commission from Lord Mount Temple, now in the National Gallery. It was commenced at the Hermitage on the hill at Highgate. Soon after it was begun Rossetti fell seriously ill, and John Marshall (to the last one of his most faithful friends) and Madox Brown took him away to Scotland. Brown left him at Stobhall, having to return to England. "Before I left him I said, Let us send him the 'Beata Beatrix,' as I knew he had a commission for it from Lord Mount Temple, and he was very hard up at the time. He said it was ridiculous to expect him to work at that time. Well, I heard afterwards of what took place. Rossetti took it out one day and looked at it and put it away again: then he looked at it again, then he started on it, and in a week the work was finished and £300 was paid to him."

This picture is a representation of Rossetti's wife, and many stories are told in connection with it, but these do not concern me here. And I would remind my readers that the omission of those incidents in Rossetti's life, and those traits of his character which were connected with his relations to women, is entirely intentional.

No mention could be made of this portion of his story without giving much pain to relations and friends, nor does the present writer believe that the private life of any artist, however famous, falls within the limits of the justifiable criticism of a contemporary, though in after years it may perhaps be fitting to consider how far the art produced was weakened and impaired by frailty and excess. I should not even have inserted here the anecdotes of Mr. Madox Brown depicting Rossetti's variable temper and want of self-control, were it not that hitherto almost the only recorded personal traits of this man have been those of intimate friends and relations, or intense sympathisers. These partizan records, though natural enough and even considering their origin praiseworthy, have given to some extent a false impression of the artist's character, and of the circumstances surrounding the pre-Raphaelite movement.

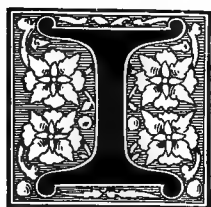


ONE OF ROSSETTI'S MODELS

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

From the crayon drawing in the possession of the author

IV.—WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT AND HIS FIGHT FOR ART.



IN the last chapter I have endeavoured to discuss the chief personal characteristics of Rossetti, give some incidents of his early artist-life, his aims and financial difficulties, and show the kind of influence he exercised over his comrades. Let me now pass to Mr. Holman Hunt and attempt a similar task. And here at the outset the difficulty occurs, that almost the only information we have on the personal life of this painter rests upon his own authority. In one way, of course, that is the best authority possible ; in another it is almost the worst for the telling of the story of pre-Raphaelitism. No man probably who ever lived could look back to the struggles of youth and the share he took in the promulgation of any great movement, and see quite without prejudice the exact proportion of his influence, and the exact measure of his action. Unless we can correct, as is possible with Rossetti, the testimony of himself, or his relations and partizans, by that of those who are more impartial judges, we must always remain a little doubtful whether the narrator is not erring, now on the side of modest self-depreciation, now on the reverse, and we must accept his account of motive and aim with a certain reserve. Even to ourselves we exercise some reticence in our most expansive moments, and our personality stands to us almost equally compounded of what we are and what we would be. In Holman Hunt's case such correction is impossible, and so it is very natural that, in the notes which follow of Mr. Hunt's early life, we should miss some of the light and shade necessary to a perfect understanding of the man, and only see as it were the presentment of his artistic personality. Moreover, in the eyes of his contemporaries that personality was in some ways overshadowed by those of his more brilliant and dashing comrades, and possibly by their more fortunate circumstance, for in the first years of their career, both

Rossetti and Millais were free from the grinding money anxieties which beset Hunt from his youth onwards. Rossetti, truly, was always in financial difficulties, but they were almost entirely due to his extravagance and improvidence. Millais appears to have earned money from the time he was fifteen, if not earlier, and both living and painting at home, and having parents of comfortable middle-class means, had not even the expense of a studio to keep up. As we have seen, at the age of twenty he had even saved £500.

If we consider the great and continual success of Millais' studenthood, his dash and confidence, and perhaps above all his handsome face and figure, and then turn to the magnetic charm which the spirit and enthusiasm of Rossetti are allowed by every one to have exercised over his friends, we shall not be surprised if the third member of the triumvirate, who, though he shared in the artistic qualities of his comrades, had not any special personal fascination of his own, has been since chiefly known through his art. To this end no doubt Hunt's long absences in the East greatly contributed, as did a certain concentration of aim, and a curiously unconscious egoism of character. This last appears to me very clearly revealed in the following reminiscences, which show us not only the persistence, industry, and energy of the young painter, but also how keen was his eye to business, and how rapidly his prices rose directly the hour of success had struck. It is quite a mistake to suppose indeed that an artist as a rule, or any of these P.R. Brethren in particular, is, or was a bad man of business. Quite the contrary: of the three painters of whom I am speaking, it would be difficult to say which was the best hand at a bargain, but all were first-rate. If we could put together the total amount of money which they have received for their work, I doubt whether it would not exceed that of any other six painters in England, and it would certainly not be far short of half a million sterling.

Much silly nonsense has been written and spoken about the pre-Raphaelites as artists who sacrificed themselves for their convictions, and dwelt in an empyrean into which no considerations of a pecuniary character were ever allowed to intrude. The facts are entirely the other way, and such effort to make out that great artists are different from all the rest of the world, and are more or less than other men affected by the pleasures and desires of youth and manhood, seems to me as ridiculous as it is futile; as contemptible as it is false. Why should not Mr. Holman Hunt equally paint "The Light of the World," and write to Mr. Bridger (who was the lucky possessor of an art-union prize, value £70), pointing out that "the amount of his prize was the exact price of my work, as he would see in the Academy list, and that I hoped it would please him to buy it"? Poor Mr. Bridger! To such a pass had all his discourses over the studio

fire of "churches and brasses and other antiquarian matters" brought him. He seems to have died hard, however, for he replies to this "hope" of Hunt's "that he should look at all the pictures for sale; and if mine was the best he should choose it: if not he should take another. But after looking for a month or more, he came to mine and bought it."

No, there is nothing inconsistent in an artist wanting a good price for his work, in driving as hard a bargain for its sale as possible. Two things only he must avoid in this connection. The first is, that he must recognise that what binds the purchaser binds also the artist; or, in other words, that he is bound by the same rules of honesty and obligation as other folk who buy and sell. And the other is, that he must, before he sells, and after, do his work as well as he can—must not have two classes of work—one which he does on commission, and the other which he does for his own honour and pleasure. To these, perhaps a third may be added as most desirable, namely, that an artist who thus does his best for himself financially, should be specially careful not to claim, or to assume, an indifference to the pecuniary result of his painting; for this is to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, and is, moreover, unfair to the purchaser, who in pictures, as in other purchases, will not be wise to forget the wholesome legal maxim of "caveat emptor!"

To return to Hunt. His father was in very moderate circumstances, and seeing that his boy would have to earn his living, we can hardly blame him that he entertained the strongest objection to his becoming an artist. In fact, he would not listen to his son's wishes in this respect. Mr. Hunt, senior, appears to have entertained the common opinion of those days with regard to artists, *i.e.* they were a dissolute, reckless set of fellows, much akin to actors and authors, and other low-class individuals—

. "perplex with impulses,
Sudden to start off cross-wise, not straight on,
Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
And not along, this black thread through the blaze."

So, when he is twelve, Holman Hunt is taken from school, where his studies in design, chiefly in his copy-books, do not appear to have been adequately appreciated, and is placed with an auctioneer and estate-agent "as a sort of probationary clerk."

The usual result follows: the probationary clerk gives his time to Apollo rather than Mercury; in other words, draws portraits instead of leases, and paints the old orange-woman who rashly enters the office in search of a customer. "I won't buy your oranges," says Hunt, "but—I'll paint your portrait." You see, Mercury had taught him

something after all—how to seize the occasion. According to Hunt, “Old Hannah (the orange-woman) was delighted, and then and there I painted her on a bit of *sized*-paper in her habit as she lived, her basket on her head and an orange in her hand.” Previously, however, the seduction of the house-agent has been accomplished by the young artist, for it turns out by the irony of fate that in his non-auctioneering moments he has artistic proclivities. And coming one day into the office and finding his clerk shuffling something away in his desk, he demands to see it, and discovers that he “can draw.” “This led to inquiries on his part as to whether I had painted, and it turned out that he was himself fond of art, and, whenever he could get a chance, practised painting. ‘One day,’ he said to me, ‘when there’s nothing much to be done, you and I will shut ourselves in here and have a day’s painting together’; and so it happened. Here were the tables turned upon my father with a vengeance! I was getting artistic encouragement from the very employer who should have been instilling into me commercial principles. This lasted about a year and a half, when, owing to my employer’s retirement from business, I obtained another situation in the City at a Manchester warehouse in Cateaton Street, managed by a London agent of Richard Cobden. Here I sat by myself in a little room looking out on three blank walls, and made entries in a ledger, and seemed farther than ever from my desire of becoming an artist. But here too, curiously enough, another artistic friend turned up in the person of an occasional clerk whose business it was to design patterns for the firm’s calicoes, etc. etc. Surreptitiously I also used to try my hand at designing, and attained sufficient proficiency to enable my friend to make use of my designs on various occasions. I remember an amusing incident of this period, which gave me great delight at the time. The window of my room was made of ground glass, and, having but little to do, I passed my time drawing with both pen and pencil flies upon its roughened surface. A good blot of ink sufficed for the body, and some delicate strokes with a hard pencil for the wings, and at a short distance the deception was perfect. Day by day the number of flies in that room increased, till one day, my employer coming in, stopped suddenly in front of the window and said, ‘I can’t make out how it is; every day I come into this room there seem to be more flies in it,’ and he took out his handkerchief to brush them away.

“So the time went on slowly till I had been nearly a year and a half in the City, and disliked it more every day. My father allowed me to spend my little salary in taking lessons of a City portrait-painter, for it was only as a profession that he disapproved of artistic employment. The lessons I received from this artist ingrained certain habits and traditional practices of which in after years I had much trouble to be rid. My master was in his faults as well as his virtues a follower of Sir Joshua Reynolds.”

Apparently Mr. Hunt, senior, was not therefore very fortunate or judicious in his attempts to wean his son from becoming an artist. First of all comes the auctioneer who is secretly devoted to painting, and then the lad is allowed to strengthen his natural artistic ability by technical practice under a master; then, to complete the paternal discomfiture, the episode of Old Hannah the orange-woman, and the auctioneer's indiscreet admiration of her portrait, which he shows to all his friends; then the Manchester warehouseman and his clerk who designs patterns for calicoes, till finally the news of his son's artistic triumphs reaches the ears of Mr. Hunt, and there is, we may fancy, a little family explosion of the kind we all know, and the lad speaks out. "I will be an artist and nothing but an artist, and if you keep me in the City till I am twenty-one, you'll only be taking away so much of my chances of doing any good in the future." That's the upshot of what Hunt describes himself as saying to his father, and no doubt the father was secretly proud of his son's resolution, and openly told him he might go to the — Academy — his own way, but that he must not expect to be supported on the journey. So here again was the existence of the P.R.B. secretly decided by such diverse elements and accidents as an auctioneer's propensity for painting, an orange-woman's lack of custom, and a father's tardy acquiescence in his son's ambition. For had it been five years later before Hunt had been able to devote himself to painting he would in all probability never have even met Millais and Rossetti, both of whom were senior to him in the Academy schools, and certainly would never have been the third founder of the P.R.B. At the date of the above conversation (1844) Hunt was sixteen.

Then ensues what Hunt describes with evident truth as a "hard fight." Three days a week he paints portraits for a livelihood, when he can get any to do, for these windfalls are rare; and on the other days he draws at the British Museum, either in the Sculpture Gallery or the Print Room. Sometimes he copies pictures, sometimes "acts as journeyman to other copyists," but the most curious part of his work is the alteration of existing portraits—portraits which did not please their originals. Thus he puts another coat on the portrait of a Mr. Godfrey and changes his expression—to order. The job is executed to Mr. Godfrey's satisfaction, and Hunt adds, with his admirable business instinct in full working order, "duly paid."

We can hardly, I think, overrate the beneficial effect of this mixture of hard artistic study, and sharp struggle for the means to live while the study was being carried on, on the character of Hunt's subsequent painting, especially with regard to the carrying out of his pre-Raphaelite theories. Evidently industry and patience were daily taught the young artist by that best of teachers—necessity, and

in the opposition, tacit indeed but unfaltering, which his adoption of art as a profession encountered at home, his spirit was undoubtedly trained to endure and overcome the wider opposition which was to meet the style of his work hereafter.

A year goes by in this way, and Hunt goes up to the Academy Schools. He is seventeen, and we might suppose from the joint result of Hannah and the portraits above mentioned, the calico patterns, the print room and the sculpture gallery study, and his youthful predisposition towards art, that his admission as a student would be tolerably certain. After all, if a lad wants to learn to draw at an Academy, the probability would seem to be that he does not know already, or in other words, that his work should be judged less by its compliance with rule and convention, than by its promise and indication of native talent. Such, however, is not, and never has been, the Royal Academy practice, and admission to the school has been granted only to those who could do after a certain highly stippled-up and elaborate fashion an antique statue. In the sculpture galleries of the British Museum there might have been seen any day during the past fifty years, and may be seen now, forty or fifty boys and girls, of all ages from ten to twenty, producing these useless and abominable chalk and charcoal drawings by the dozen—by the hundred. Six mortal weeks is the least time which each student spends in the vain elaboration of these antique models; and the result is judged not by the manner in which the drawing has caught the spirit of the original—or “*les grands contours du dessin*,” as my old master Legros used to say—but by the smoothness of the shading, the “polish,” so to speak, with which the light and shade are rendered.

No more stupid and absolutely futile method of selecting a student could be conceived than this: no more certain manner of preventing an artist in after life understanding and enjoying the beauty of antique art could be adopted than this of making him labour for weeks, without help or explanation, to reproduce the delicacies of light and shade, and the details of modelling which he has neither learnt to see, to enjoy, nor to understand.

Well, anyhow Holman Hunt's drawings were not “polished” enough, and the Academy would have none of them at this date. After some months he tries again, having in the interval polished diligently, but still the work is not right, and again he is rejected. At this, his long-suffering father loses patience and delivers himself of an ultimatum in the form of a lecture, through which, despite its kindness, we can read a grim determination.

“Then my father spoke very seriously. I was wasting my time and energy; I should do no good as a painter. My drawings were

clever enough for friends to admire, but between them and the professional class there was a great gulf, and so on : winding up with, that he would allow me to try once more, but if that failed, 'I must go back to the City.' ”

A year and a half had now passed since Hunt had left his high stool in the warehouse, and he was apparently no nearer his aim than before. We cannot blame the father's resolution, for we may conceive how difficult it was for him to believe that the lad was right, and the Academicians wrong in thinking that there was here no stuff out of which a great artist might be made. Still it must have been a nervous moment for Hunt when he stood for the third and last time between the worlds of commerce and art, waiting for the decision of the Royal Academy as to which should claim him. We know the result: even Jupiter sometimes nods, and this must have been an occasion, for the third drawing is—accepted. The City stool is vacant for ever, and Mr. Hunt, senior, goes back to his commercial avocations and his unfinished lawsuit, a wiser and a sadder man. Put not your trust in Academies, is probably his motto for the remainder of his days.

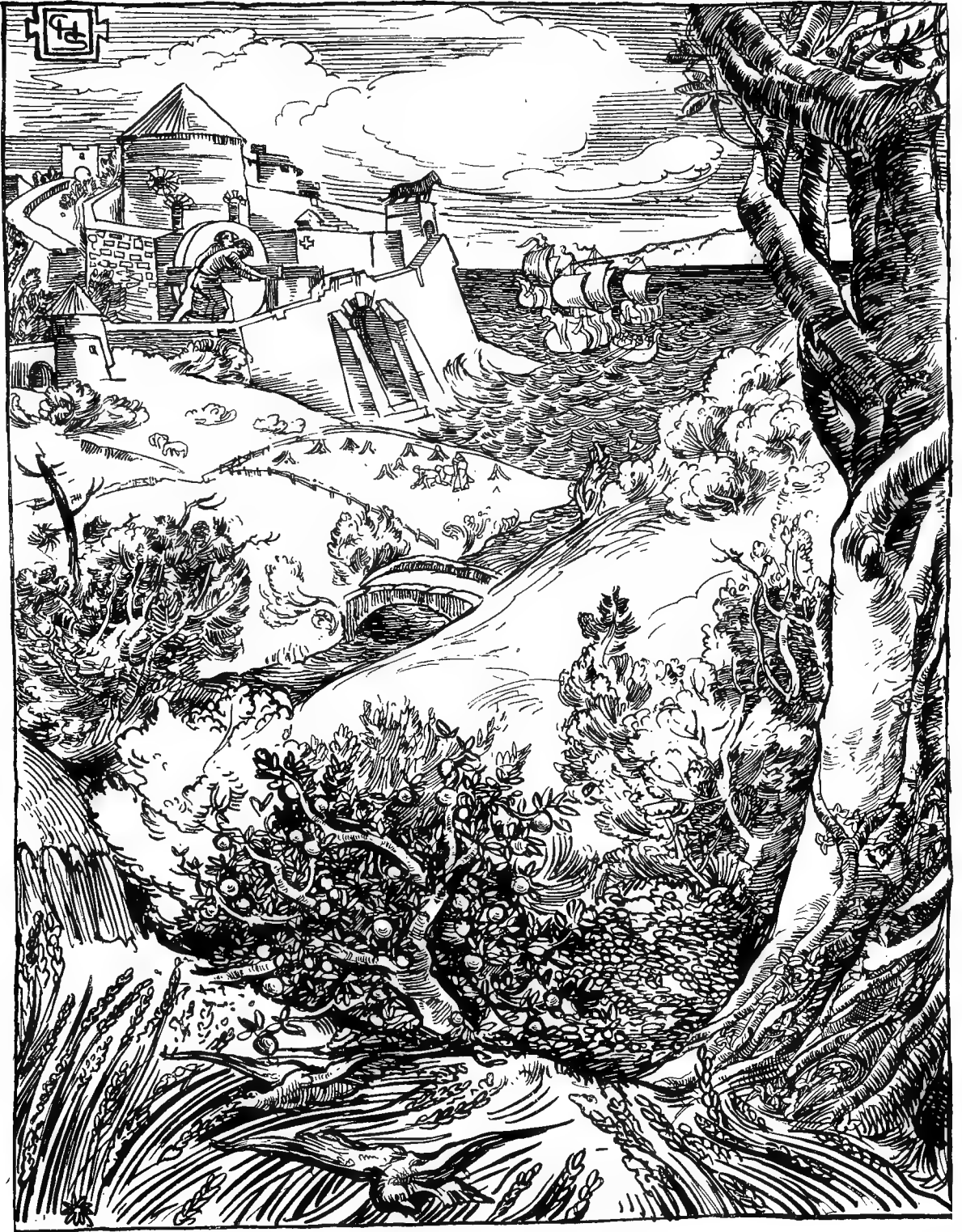
Mr. Hunt gives very few dates—none precisely ; but his entrance to the Academy must have been towards the end of 1846. Millais (then fifteen) was there already, and had won the silver medal in the Antique School ; Rossetti, too, was a student, probably since 1844. He had entered in 1843 Sim's Drawing Academy in Queen Street, Bloomsbury, a school then kept by F. S. Carey, son of the translator of Dante, and probably been admitted to the Academy in the following year. Had his entry been later Hunt would have met him, as he did Millais, in the antique sculpture room of the British Museum. This was not the case ; and it was about a year later that Rossetti spoke to Hunt for the first time (with one exception noted below), on the occasion of the exhibition of the latter's first picture at the Royal Academy—"The Eve of St. Agnes" (1848). This led to Rossetti's calling at Hunt's studio, and subsequently to the formation of the P.R.B., but this portion of the story is so important that I must deal with it in a separate chapter.

V.—THE FOUNDATION OF THE PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD.



HIS will be a convenient place to glance at the English Art of this period, as it appeared to the three men who were soon to influence it so materially. That there is a great difficulty in doing this satisfactorily will be understood if the reader will bear in mind that one of these painters (Millais) was little given to expression of his beliefs; another (Rossetti) was so enthusiastic and changeable that he was led away entirely by the feeling of the moment; and the third (Hunt), though he has put down in his notes reflections on various painters, has not done so in such a manner as to lead us to believe his views were either clear or determinate. Hunt's writing is in fact, if I may be pardoned for saying so, as *un*-pre-Raphaelite as is well possible; it is, in studio phrase, "blottesque," conventional, and "treacly."

I have tried to the best of my ability to extract from the views of this painter some consistency of principle and idea, but have failed to do so save in one or two instances. The nearest approach to a definite idea is his dislike of prettiness, which turns up in one form or another in most of the criticisms. In Landseer it appears as "pomatumy texture"; in Etty, "Parisian paper-hanger's taste"; and "cloy some richness and sweetness"; Mulready is injured by his taste for prettiness; Maclise by his for glamour; Leslie's style is "miniature"; and Murillo's "large 'Holy Family' in the National Gallery" is "rubbish." From such remarks the bias against prettiness is evident enough, but that is by no means an uncommon bias with artists. In a subsequent description, where Hunt tells us of the quattro-centists he did admire in the National Gallery, we find less to guide us. Francia, Garafola, Van Eyck are the only names mentioned; and there is a sudden dash of panegyric on some details of the "Sta. Caterina" of Raphael and the "Bacchus and Ariadne"



THE GLADNESS OF THE LAND

C. H. SHANNON

From the original drawing in the possession of the author

of Titian. The really great pre-Raphaelite masters appear to have attracted no notice from him at all—we hear nothing of Giotto and the Giotteschi, nothing of Carpaccio, the Bellinis, Mantegna, Orcagna, Angelico, Masaccio, Memling, Quentin-Matsys, and, strangest of all, considering Hunt's prepossessions, of Albrecht Dürer. On the other hand, we find an early portrait of his mother by Rubens spoken of as "possessing this characteristic of care and humility," and a Holbein as fascinating him by its delicate painting.

On the whole, in fact, I cannot discover from Hunt's own description of his artistic prepossessions in these student days that there was any idea whatever in his mind analogous to that which Ruskin afterwards attributed to him. It is true that in a later portion of his reminiscences he states more or less definitely that this was the case, but this statement is made so much in the very words of Ruskin, and is so obviously a reflection of the defence of pre-Raphaelitism by that great critic, that we may, I think, especially when we remember that it was not written till forty years after the events described, assume it to be rather the interpretation of the writer, than the record of the artist. I find it myself quite impossible to believe that a student who represents himself as having been a frequenter of the National Gallery and an admirer of early Italian and Flemish work therein, could have been (as he is represented by Ruskin) so profoundly moved by seeing some *engravings* of Ghiberti, as to have his principles entirely modified thereby—or could find in them qualities of truth and simplicity which he had never found in the other paintings of that period. Moreover, such a conversion is not only incredible, but was in this instance entirely unnecessary. Painting flies on the window of his master's counting-house was Hunt's real conversion to pre-Raphaelitism—old Hannah the orange-woman was his Ghiberti, and his slavery at commercial portraits, and the re-coating of Mr. Godfrey and his friends, the school in which he learned fidelity of detail, industry, and patience. Another bit of real instruction, inspiration—in the old sense of the word—Hunt received about this period at the National Gallery. While he was copying Wilkie's "Blind Fiddler," a visitor "looking over me said that Wilkie painted it without any dead colouring, but finished each bit as fresco was done." The speaker (we are not told his name) had been the painter's pupil. Hunt calls this the first bit of genuine instruction he had received, and one which "in some ways, perhaps, determined the course of my artistic life." He does not, very properly, count the nominal instruction given in the Royal Academy Schools; in fact, says plainly that there was none worthy of the name—in which opinion Mr. Watts, Royal Academician though he be, is quite at one with him, saying frankly of his studenthood there, which must have been but slightly before Hunt's time, "finding

there was no teaching, I ceased to attend." On this instruction of Wilkie's pupil, Hunt begins to remodel his practice: he tries for definite meaning and precision in each touch; he endeavours to get rid of all careless, "loose," irresponsible handling; he purifies his style, and it is from this point of view—the technical point of view—be it observed, that he grows to admire the early workers whose practice had been founded on fresco.

The opinions of Rossetti at this period appear to have been chiefly influenced by his literary tastes. His brother, indeed, tells us that he studied Retsch's outlines, and used to fill in his sketches for a drawing club to which he belonged from a series of lithographs by "Filippo Pistrucci"; and he disliked the conventional English and French pictures alike in treatment and subject, hating them with equal impartiality; but with antique art I cannot find that he concerned himself at all, his predilections being entirely in favour of the romantic and mediæval poetry, and this chiefly of the northern nations. His study of Dante did not, according to his brother, begin till 1844, at which time he was already familiar with Scott, Byron, Keats, Coventry Patmore, Mr. Browning, Tennyson, and Shakespeare. The *Nibelungen Lied* also was a great favourite, and a little later came Coleridge and W. Bell Scott. Illustrations to one or other of these, and subjects of a quasi-poetical, quasi-religious nature, such, for instance, as the "Girlhood of Mary Virgin," formed the staple of his art-work in these years, when he was but an infrequent attendant at the Academy Schools. It is notable that the mediæval bias thus early acquired, and very plainly evident in both the "Annunciation" and the "Girlhood of Mary Virgin," never entirely deserted him, nor did he ever entirely abandon the use of symbolism. How different were the practice, the education, and the aim of Hunt I have just shown—as different as had been his early reading of Homer and Plutarch, geometrical and mathematical books, and the auctioneer's ledger. A strange dislike of sculpture was at this time, and, I believe, later, a characteristic of Rossetti's art feeling; and I cannot find that, apart from his Shakespeare study, the drama either written or acted influenced him. It must be remembered also with regard to his religious compositions, that not only was Rossetti an Italian by descent, but he was by training, no matter how much he may have abandoned the creed in after life, a Catholic. The arrangement of bringing up the girls in the religion of the mother, and the boys in that of the father—adopted by the Rossettis—was more common then than now. No doubt the Catholic influence working through Dantesque poetry coloured his painting from the first, as indeed it coloured his poetry, but the religious side of his art was always more apparent than real. I can find neither in the records of the man's life, all given by friends and partizans, in his letters, of

which I have many and have read more, nor in any of his writings or pictures, any really religious feeling. A spiritual aspect there is to his art, but of a most indefinite and dreamy character: more a protest against the empire of the body than a forgetfulness of its influence.

Of Millais I have as yet said nothing, because his part, then as now, was not the part of the thinker, the reformer, or the dreamer, but the part of the doer. He was the "Good-tempered man" of the community, caring nothing much for all these details of theory or principle, tradition or sentiment, but ready always to fall in with his friends' views, reflect his friends' feelings, and sometimes even, if all tales be true, borrow his friends' conceptions.

With these brief hints as to the views of the three young artists, let us hear how they founded their celebrated association.

Rossetti had seen at the Academy, and been greatly pleased with Hunt's "Eve of St. Agnes," and after congratulating him warmly thereon, had asked if he might come to Hunt's studio, and "thus the three Pre-Raphaelite Brethren were first brought into intimate relations." Before this Millais and Rossetti had known each other, and Hunt and Millais had made acquaintance at the Museum, but the three had not associated together. The result of the acquaintance is that Rossetti takes a studio with Hunt in Cleveland Street, and thither continually comes Madox Brown full of advice for his pupil Rossetti, and with a little to spare for his pupil's friend; and thither comes also Millais, "his spirit on fire with eagerness to seize whatever he saw to be good." Hunt has a solid capital of £70 from his art-union prize and "£7 from portraits" (what is your price nowadays for a portrait, Mr. Hunt, I wonder?), and Rossetti—but no one knows now, or ever did know, what Rossetti had or had not in the way of money. I suppose, however, he bought his draperies, and three expensive lay figures, and that sentry-box arrangement to put them in, which tickled his master's fancy so much.

One evening the comrades go to tea with the Millais family, and there are shown, to pass away the evening, I suppose, which possibly went rather slowly, "a book of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa." Let Hunt tell the story himself:—

"It was probably the finding of this book at this special time which caused the establishment of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Millais, Rossetti, and myself were all seeking for some sure ground, some starting-point for our art which would be secure, if it were ever so humble. As we searched through this book of engravings we found in them, or thought we found, that freedom from corruption, pride, and disease for

which we sought. Here there was, at least, no trace of decline, no conventionality, no arrogance. Whatever the imperfection, the whole spirit of the art was simple and sincere—was, as Ruskin afterwards said, ‘eternally and unalterably true.’ Think what a revelation it was to find such work at such a moment, and to recognise it with the triple enthusiasm of our three spirits. If Newton could say of his theory of gravitation, that his conviction of its truth increased tenfold from the moment in which he got one other person to believe in it, was it wonderful that, when we three saw, as it were, in a flash of lightning, this truth of art, it appealed to us almost with the force of a revolution? Neither then nor afterwards did we affirm that there was not much healthy and good art after the time of Raphael; but it appeared to us that afterwards art was so frequently tainted with this canker of corruption that it was only in the earlier work we could find with certainty absolute health. Up to a definite point the tree was healthy; above it, disease began: side by side with life there appeared death. Think how different were the three temperaments which saw this clearly. I may say plainly of myself, that I was a steady and even enthusiastic worker, trained by the long course of early difficulties and opposition of which I have told the story, and determined to find the right path for my art. Rossetti, with his spirit alike subtle and fiery, was essentially a proselytiser, sometimes to an almost absurd degree, but possessed, alike in his poetry and painting, with an appreciation of beauty of the most intense quality. Millais, again, stood in some respects midway between us, showing a rare combination of extraordinary artistic faculty with an amount of sterling English commonsense. And, moreover, he was in these early days, beyond almost any one with whom I have been acquainted, full of a generous, quick enthusiasm; a spirit on fire with eagerness to seize whatever he saw to be good, which shone out in every line of his face, and made it, as Rossetti once said, look sometimes like the face of an angel. All of us had our qualities, though it does not come within the scope of this paper to analyse them fully. They were such as rather helped than embarrassed us in working together.

“Pre-Raphaelite” was adopted, after some discussion, as a distinctive prefix, though the word had first been used as a term of contempt by our enemies. And as we bound ourselves together, the word ‘Brotherhood’ was suggested by Rossetti as preferable to clique or association. It was in a little spirit of fun that we thus agreed that Raphael, the Prince of Painters, was the inspiring influence of the art of the day; for we saw

that the practice of contemporary painters was as different from that of the master whose example they quoted, as established interest or indifference had ever made the conduct of disciples. It was instinctive prudence, however, which suggested to us that we should use the letters P.R.B., unexplained, on our pictures (after the signature) as the one mark of our union.

“The first work that we agreed to do after this was a series of designs for Keats’ ‘Isabella.’ These were to be executed entirely on our new principles, and subsequently etched for publication. Millais chose as his subject the household of Lorenzo’s brothers at meals. Rossetti at first made excuses for procrastination. I did one of Lorenzo at his desk in the warehouse, in order that thus (with Millais’ design) the lover’s position in the house should be made clear to the spectator from the outset. Though Millais had much oil work on hand which had to be finished in the old style, he was impatient to begin in the new manner, and he announced his determination to paint his design. But his old work still hung about, until we were almost doubtful of the time before the sending-in day being sufficient for the task, when suddenly, about November, the whole atmosphere of his studio was changed, and the new white canvas was installed on the easel. Day by day advanced, at a pace beyond all calculation, the picture now known to the whole of England,¹ which I venture to say is the most wonderful painting that any youth still under twenty years of age ever did in the world.

“In my studio Rossetti’s plan of work promised to do all that was desired. The picture was ‘The Education of Mary Virgin,’ and he had advanced it considerably, but, from his unchecked impatience at difficulties, the interruptions to our work, to mine as much as to his, were so serious that once I had to go out walking with him to argue that, without more self-restraint on his part, we should certainly lose our chances of appearing, in the same season, in a band with Millais. He took this remonstrance in the best part, and applied himself with new patience to his work, which ultimately possessed in the important parts the most exquisite beauty and grace; he exhibited it subsequently in a gallery in Portland Place. Millais’ picture was seen with wonder when finished, and he sold it before his ‘show’ day. My ‘private view’ was without any visitors, but the picture was delivered by myself in the evening, still wet, at the Academy. Before we were admitted to varnish our pictures we learned that they had been hung as pendants to

¹ “Lorenzo and Isabella.

one another in fair places just above the line, and in the *Times* I remember the notice of the exhibition began with two columns of comment upon our pictures as the remarkable feature of the collection. The fact itself was an unexpectedly gratifying testimony to the impression the works had made. On going to the Academy at seven in the morning (to get the longest opportunity, if necessary, for work before the public were admitted at twelve), we were received by many of the members with cordial compliments—some introducing themselves to me for this purpose—but there was an opposing spirit of indignation expressing itself loudly by some artists."

To make a long story short, Rossetti's picture was sold on the private view day, Hunt's shortly afterwards for £100, through the intervention of Egg, one of the Royal Academicians. The purchaser was Mr. Gibbons, who appears to have bought the work, if we may trust Hunt's account, as a matter of charity, for he did not hang it in his collection, and on his death it was the only picture sold by the family. As I shall not have occasion to refer again to this composition, I may add here that there was perhaps some little excuse for this proceeding on the part of Mr. Gibbons and his family, for the "Rienzi swearing to avenge the Death of his Brother" is not a picture which even the admirers of Mr. Hunt would at the present day esteem very highly. It is laborious in detail and execution, and of some dramatic power; but the colour is remarkably garish and unpleasant, and the attitudes and gestures of the various figures awkward and strained. The same criticism applies to some extent to the succeeding picture by this artist, "The Christian Missionary," the landscape portion of which was painted on the Lea marshes, and which was exhibited the succeeding year, when it was hung as a pendant to the "Christ in the Home of his Parents," by Millais.

"While we had been quietly working, the hostile feeling against us had shown itself to be wilder and more extended. A newspaper had in its gossiping column revealed the meaning of P.R.B., which had been disclosed, through the weakness of Rossetti, to a rank gossip, and far and near it seemed as if the honour of Raphael was the feeling dearest of all to the bosom of England, and that this we had impiously assailed. The leading journals denounced our work as iniquitous and infamous, and, to make our enormity more shameful in extra-artistic circles, the great Charles Dickens wrote a leading article against Millais' picture in *Household Words*. This was an attack upon the whole of us, and though my picture was not mentioned, the prejudice excited was more practically damaging to me, since Millais had sold his work, while mine had still the duty to perform of tempting 150 guineas out of the pockets of some admirer

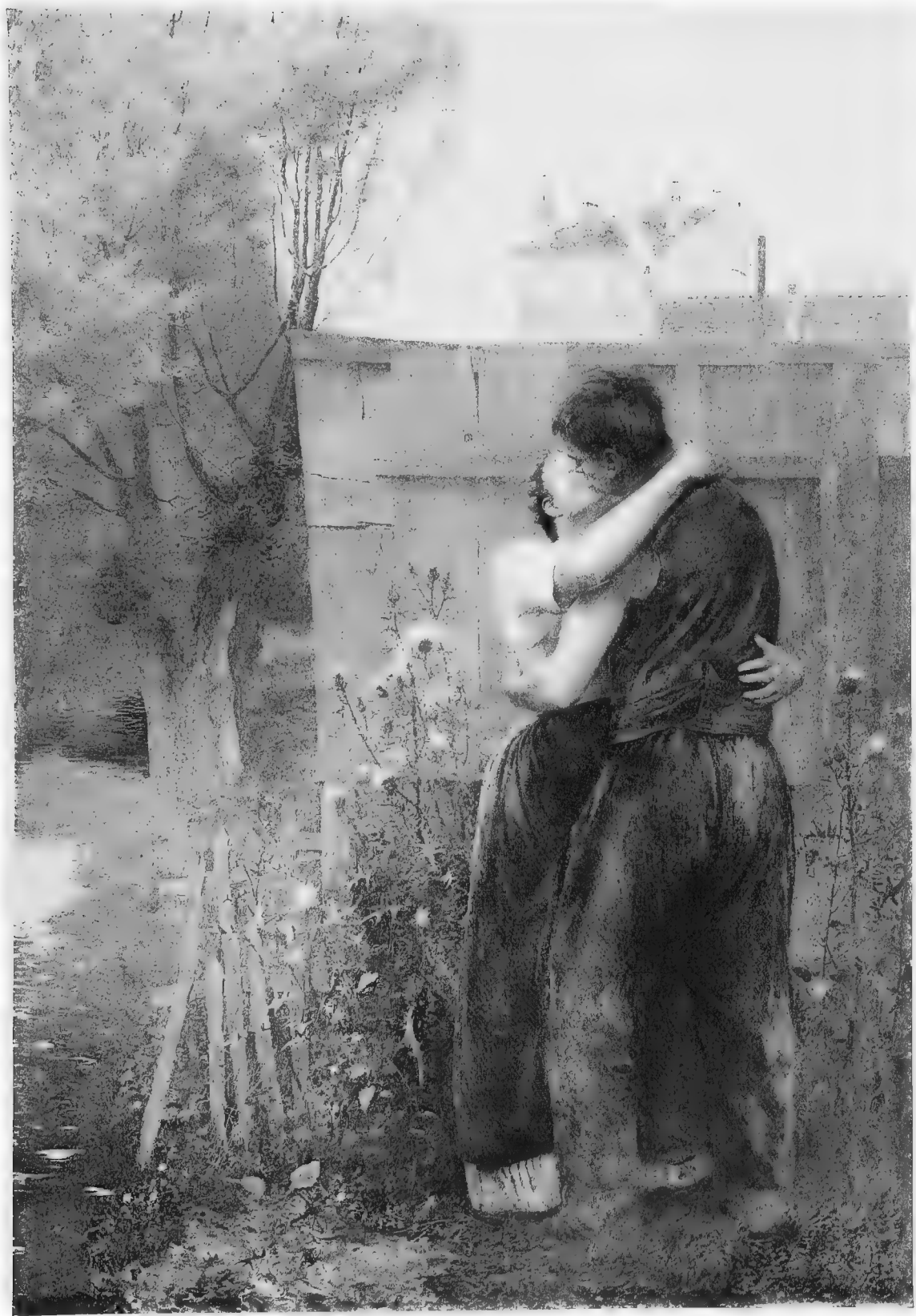
or approver, before I could go on with a new work. Sometimes I went to the Exhibition stealthily, hoping to hear some opinion expressed, but as soon as the public arrived at my picture they invariably said, 'Oh, this is one of those preposterous pre-Raphaelite works,' and went on to the next without looking again upon the canvas. One fellow-student, some years my senior, told me that he regretted to see me mixed up with this charlatanism ; that he perfectly understood that our object was to attract great attention to ourselves by our extravagant work ; and that when we had succeeded in making ourselves notorious (which, being undeniably clever fellows, we should soon do), we should paint pictures of real merit. I thereupon wickedly said that he had divined our purpose, and besought him to respect the secret. . . ."

VI.—THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN RUSKIN.



THE account given in the last chapter is curiously reminiscent even in language of that more celebrated description of the founding of the Brotherhood by Mr. Ruskin—a description which I have shown some ground for believing was partly imaginary and wholly mistaken, not in the relation of incident, but the explanation of aim. For though the movement and the inspiring influence of natural study and abandonment of convention were real and important enough, the choice of a name was scarcely more than a joke. The religious and moral principles with which Ruskin credited the young artists were, in truth, in the case of two of their number, entirely non-existent, and even with the third, at this time, extremely doubtful. Hunt himself says the name was chosen “in a spirit of fun”: Rossetti says, in so many words, that though the *movement* was real the *Brotherhood* was a joke; so says Woolner; so says Madox Brown. And though, perhaps, these painters in later years may have somewhat underrated or been ashamed of the seriousness of their youthful confederacy, there is the strongest intrinsic evidence that Ruskin’s high moral and metaphysical explanation thereof was one of those ingenious theories of which he has given so many to the world, but which have no objective validity. On this point, however, where authorities contradict one another so flatly, the historian must decide by collateral evidence, all of which is in favour of the less serious interpretation of the “Brotherhood.”

The artist who most nearly approached to Ruskin’s ideal, but non-existent pre-Raphaelite, was undoubtedly Holman Hunt. Yet even his art is not essentially the realistic art at which Ruskin imagined the P.R.B. aimed. Hunt would disclaim the name of realist perhaps more emphatically than any other. I do not quite know what word he would take in its place, nor is it, I think, very



LES AMOUREUX. — A. G. BINET

certain, or even probable that the painter could himself precisely define his position. The nearest approach to such a definition with which I am acquainted is comprised in the following quotation :—

“While we differed so far, it may be seen that we were never, what often we have been called, *realists*. I think the art would have ceased to have the slightest interest for any one of the three painters concerned had the object only been to make a representation, elaborate or unelaborate, of a fact in Nature. Independent of the consideration that the task would put out of operation the faculty of making man ‘how like a god,’ it seemed then, as it does now, that a mere imitator gradually comes to see Nature so clay-like and meaningless—so like only to what one sees when illness brings a heavy cloud before the eyes—that his pictures or statues make a spectator feel, not how much more beautiful the world is than she seemed before, but only that she is a tedious infliction, or even an oppressive nightmare. . . . On one other point there has been misapprehension which it is now time to correct. In agreeing to use the utmost elaboration in painting our first pictures, we never meant more than that the practice was essential for training the eye and the hand of the young artist; we should never have admitted that the relinquishment of this habit of work by a matured painter would have made him less of a pre-Raphaelite. I can say this the better now because, although it is not true, it is often said, that my detail is microscopic, I have retained later than either of my companions the pencilling of a student. When I take to large brushes, and enrich my canvases with impasto, it will imply that the remnant of my life would not suffice to enable me to express my thoughts in other fashion, and that I have in my own opinion obtained enough from severe discipline to trust myself again to the self-confident handling of my youth, to which I have already referred.”

These words are particularly memorable in connection with Ruskin's description of this movement, as they show that the great writer to a considerable extent misconceived even Hunt's position, and mistook the means adopted by him for training the hand and eye, for the actual and final aim of the painter. The “highest possible degree of completion” to which Ruskin alludes as the principle of pre-Raphaelitism was, we see, even with Hunt, but an incident of its practice—an incident which might or might not be abandoned when the skill of hand, to acquire which it had been serviceable, was gained. As might have been expected, this minute realisation ultimately shaped itself in the work of each artist in accordance with personal idiosyncrasy. We can trace the influence in Millais' brilliant painting of texture and surface, we find it translated in Rossetti's art to a clear vision

of each symbolical accessory, and in Hunt's great religious pictures our attention is attracted by the multiplicity and the elaboration of the detail by aid of which the artist has worked out his conception. The difference of aim, as of manner, is in this respect very marked, Millais painting his surroundings often with what Ruskin once characterised as "dull and objectless veracity"; Rossetti using his details for the double purpose of increasing the spiritual significance, and the colour loveliness of his picture, while Hunt appears to take the detail of his picture from the point of view of an earnest preacher or faithful historian, losing frequently the rightness of material aspect in his desire to omit no portion of his subject, and caring little, if at all, whether the added detail be beautiful or no, so long as it be an intellectual item in the telling of his story. I fear to weary my readers on this point, or I should have been very desirous to analyse from this point of view such typical pictures as Millais' "Black Brunswicker," Hunt's "Isabella and the Pot of Basil," and Rossetti's "Beloved," or the "Blue Bower": any one, however, who is interested in the subject can easily work out such an analysis and comparison, one which is not only interesting in the present connection, but which points to three phases of artistic energy—the spiritually significant, the intellectually interesting, and the craftsmanly perfect—of which all very great art partakes, and becomes the greater or the less perfect as it preserves or ignores their relation and their importance. A few words on this subject will be found in the concluding portion of these notes.

Most readers will, however, agree that, supposing three young artists to have taken such a serious, almost religious, view of their vocation as that indicated by Ruskin, it would be extremely improbable that they would in after years—and so very quickly—entirely abandon, not only their special principles, and their general point of view, but even their early habit of earnestness and moral theory; and yet this was certainly the case with the pre-Raphaelites. No doubt Mr. Holman Hunt is, and always was, in his way, a man who regarded his art as a religion, and indeed, in his mind, the two seem to be mixed up inextricably—of which more anon; but this applies in no slightest degree to either Rossetti or Millais. In the painting, and, indeed, so far as the world knows, in the intellectual and emotional lives of these painters, the religious influence is absolutely undiscoverable. Of Rossetti we can speak with certainty from the records left us by himself in his poems; and the whole life, genial, healthy, jovial, and successful as it has been, of Sir John Millais, is that of a cheery artistic Gallio, who, whatever may be his religious convictions, does not obtrude them upon others, or even worry over them himself. It is opposed to everything ever recorded of him, or seen in him, or spoken by him, that he should as a boy have reasoned about art "being

tainted with the canker of corruption." That is not the idea of the painter but of the literary man: it is Ruskin, not Millais, Rossetti, or even Hunt, though the last-mentioned uses the expression, who thinks along those lines of moral worth or decadence, and reads into the art question, the religious bias. No doubt the influence of Ruskin had already reached Hunt, who had had *Modern Painters* lent him by a fellow-student, and been greatly impressed by the teaching of the "graduate." He tells us that "to get through the book I had to sit up most of the night more than once, and I returned it before I had got half the good there was in it; but of all readers, none so strongly as myself could have felt that it was expressly written for him."

There is no evidence, however, that this influence touched Rossetti in any way, indeed there is the strongest evidence to the contrary; for Rossetti regarded Ruskin from the first, if we may trust the evidence of his letters, in the light of a picture-buyer, and one who could help the P.R.B. from his writings, and his purse, rather than as a teacher and a guide. Indeed, in these latter characters he altogether declined to accept him, and as long as the intimacy between the critic and the painter lasted it was continually strained by the one insisting upon teaching, and the other refusing to be taught, till at last there came a row royal, and the friendship was at an end. I rather feel inclined to agree with W. M. Rossetti's view upon this point, which is, that his brother was right and wise in resisting dictation; and there seems to be little doubt but that Ruskin was quite human enough to be very genuinely surprised and very frankly annoyed at such resistance. In after years, at all events, when the Professor's influence was at its height, it is remarkable that there is scarcely a mention of Rossetti's work.

One very prevalent misconception on this point which I have never seen corrected is, that Ruskin discovered, as it were, the P.R.B., and was their first champion. This was not the case: his knowledge of them was due to the poet Coventry Patmore, an old friend of Rossetti's, who not only informed Ruskin on the subject, but urged upon him the propriety of writing in defence of the young painters' work. Moreover, the intercourse between Rossetti and Ruskin did not *commence till* 1854, by which time the "Brotherhood" was six years old and about at an end, and both Rossetti's early oil-pictures, "The Girlhood of Mary Virgin" and the "Annunciation" (now in the National Gallery), had been painted and sold. Millais had painted the "Christ in the Home of his Parents," the "Supper in the House of Isabella," and Hunt "The Christian Missionary," the "Claudio and Isabella," the "Rienzi," and other pictures.

In the first letter of Mr. Ruskin to the *Times* on the subject of

the pre-Raphaelite painters, dated 1851, he tells us he has "no acquaintance with any of these artists, and very imperfect sympathy with them," and proceeds to explain that the tendency of their painting is "Romanist" and "Tractarian"; in the second letter he again expresses in another fashion his dislike of their "morbid tendencies," though he by this time attributes these to another origin. In these letters there is *no mention whatever* of Rossetti, though there is a high panegyric on a picture by Mr. Charles Collins, one of the weaker members of the brotherhood, who subsequently abandoned painting, and made for himself some name in literature before his early death. It is notable that one of the pictures by Millais referred to in these letters is the "Woodman's Daughter," an illustration to one of Coventry Patmore's poems, and it is very probable that this circumstance had some connection with Patmore's interest in the P.R.B. I believe the author of *The Angel in the House* was at this time acquainted with Millais and Rossetti, if not with Hunt. The next letters to the *Times* from Ruskin are dated three years later, and in these mention is altogether confined to Hunt's work. The Millais "Huguenot" was in the same exhibition, if I am not mistaken.

There was some excuse perhaps for the omission of Rossetti's name from these letters, as his work was not in the Academy at any period during his lifetime, but the "Annunciation" had been publicly exhibited at the Portland Street Gallery, and the painter's work made known to Ruskin by Rossetti's first patron M'Cracken. I only insert these facts to show how very limited, tardy, and incomplete was the part taken by Ruskin in the pre-Raphaelite movement. The truth is, that from the first he had only sympathy with it on those points where the subjects or the sentiment of the pictures were such as he was in touch with. This is shown very clearly by the descriptions of Hunt's pictures, and the amount of space and consideration given to their literary and symbolical meaning, in comparison with their artistic qualities. Moreover, if we take Ruskin's chief work, published during the very thick of the pre-Raphaelite movement, *i.e.* from 1846-1860, we find that the name of Rossetti is never even mentioned in one of the five volumes; that Millais' name occurs in the index but twice (once in a note), and that incorrectly, for the note was expunged years before the index edition was published; and the second reference is a bare mention of "The Huguenot," coupled with "The Awakening Conscience," the artist's name appearing in neither case. Thus it is literally the case that, in the completed edition of *Modern Painters*, the names of both Millais¹ and Rossetti are entirely omitted; and this, despite the fact that the third member of the school, Holman Hunt, is, according to the index, mentioned

¹ I am of course fully aware that a good reason might have been given for the lack of reference to the former of these artists; but there could have been none for the omission of Rossetti.

no less than ten times—on each occasion with enthusiastic admiration and unstinted praise. Even if we admit the artistic equality of Hunt with Rossetti and Millais, and this, I think, as I shall show hereafter, can hardly be seriously maintained, Mr. Ruskin's silence as to the two last-named painters can only be explained on the ground of deliberate intention, and can hardly be justified in a critic who had from 1851 downwards posed as the champion of pre-Raphaelitism. In saying this I am not forgetting the mention made by Ruskin elsewhere of these painters. I am only pointing out that it was the correspondence of the subject-matter and the spirit of Hunt's work, and not the artistic excellence, which occasioned our great critic's enthusiasm. He found in the religious intention of the painter, in his somewhat blind and unselecting fidelity to Nature, and most of all perhaps in his subject-matter, a complete echo of his own theories of the *raison d'être* of art; and, both in form and spirit, this great, this surpassing excellence, as Ruskin conceived it to be, rendered him comparatively blind to the imperfections of Hunt's painting, and comparatively indifferent to the superior craftsmanship of Millais, and the infinitely higher imaginative power of Rossetti.

It was a great misfortune that this should have been the case, not only for the painters concerned, but for the cause of fine art in England. When we consider the unique power possessed by Ruskin of rousing the enthusiasm of the young, and of setting forth the beauties with which he was in sympathy, whether they existed in pictures or in nature, it is beyond measure vexatious to find his justice and his critical insight so frequently blinded by the necessity of finding a definite unalterable correspondence and connection between fine art and a special religious theory. Had he been content to assert the correspondence and connection of art with the intellectual and spiritual needs of humanity, as well as with its physical pleasures and experiences, he would, I think, have been on safe ground, at all events he would have been able to justify his admiration of this, that, or the other school, or painter, without twisting the facts of history, or action, and seeking to show that art flourished or decayed in proportion to the growth or decay in religious belief and national honour—a contention which is absolutely contradicted by all historical evidence, and by none more than the true history of the *Stones of Venice*.

We must not forget that Ruskin's letters to the *Times* were not written till the spring of 1851; in other words, two years after the foundation of the Brotherhood, and at the period when the strongest attacks were made upon the P.R.B. It is rather interesting to remember that on this occasion Charles Dickens himself became an art critic, and wrote an article in *Household Words* against pre-

Raphaelitism. The prevailing opinion appears to have been that the Brethren were only seeking to attract attention by the extravagance of their work, and the critics undeniably treated them with great harshness. Fortunately this condemnation had its fitting reward, for a chance was given thereby to Ruskin's championship of the cause; a championship which was at the time extraordinarily effective. In the Exhibition, concerning which the first of these letters was written, Hunt's work, for the first time perhaps, really merited high praise. His picture of "Valentine and Sylvia" in that year undoubtedly contained much, especially in the painting of the dry leaves and woodland landscape, that was very beautiful. And, whether it was from the influence of Rossetti and Millais, with the former of whom Hunt had been staying at Sevenoaks while the sylvan portion of his picture was painted, or from other and more personal causes, the colour of this picture is far superior to any of the earlier productions of the artist. The fault which Ruskin found with the school as a whole at this time, a fault, by the way, which could only be fairly alleged against two of its members, was the "commonness of feature in many of the principal figures," did really exist, and was traceable a good many years subsequently in the work of Millais; as for instance in the celebrated picture of "Apple Blossoms," in which the faces of the children are of an intensity of ugliness hardly to be atoned for, even by the splendid painting of the blossoming tree. Those, too, who remember what may be called the last pre-Raphaelite picture by this artist, *i.e.* the "Vale of Rest," will probably agree that the faces of the two nuns suffer from the same hard unattractiveness. However, with this exception, Ruskin's criticism of the "Valentine and Sylvia" is enthusiastically favourable.

"Further examination of this picture has even raised the estimate I had previously formed of its marvellous truth in detail and splendour in colour; nor is its general conception less deserving of praise; the action of Valentine, his arm thrown round Sylvia, and his hand clasping hers at the same instant as she falls at his feet, is most faithful and beautiful, nor less so the contending of doubt and distress with awakening hope in the half-shadowed, half-sunlit countenance of Julia. Nay, even the momentary struggle of Proteus with Sylvia just past, is indicated by the trodden grass and broken fungi of the foreground. But all this thoughtful conception and absolutely inimitable execution fail in making immediate appeal to the feelings, owing to the unfortunate type chosen for the face of Sylvia. Certainly this cannot be she whose lover was

. . . 'as rich in having such a jewel,
As twenty seas, if all their sands were pearl.'

While Hunt was still waiting for the sale of this picture, he obtained through Mr. Dyce a commission to clean and restore the wall paintings by Rigaud at the Trinity House. This job he executed after the usual manner of "restorers"—to wit, by repainting as much as possible of the original, and making additions whenever he felt inclined.

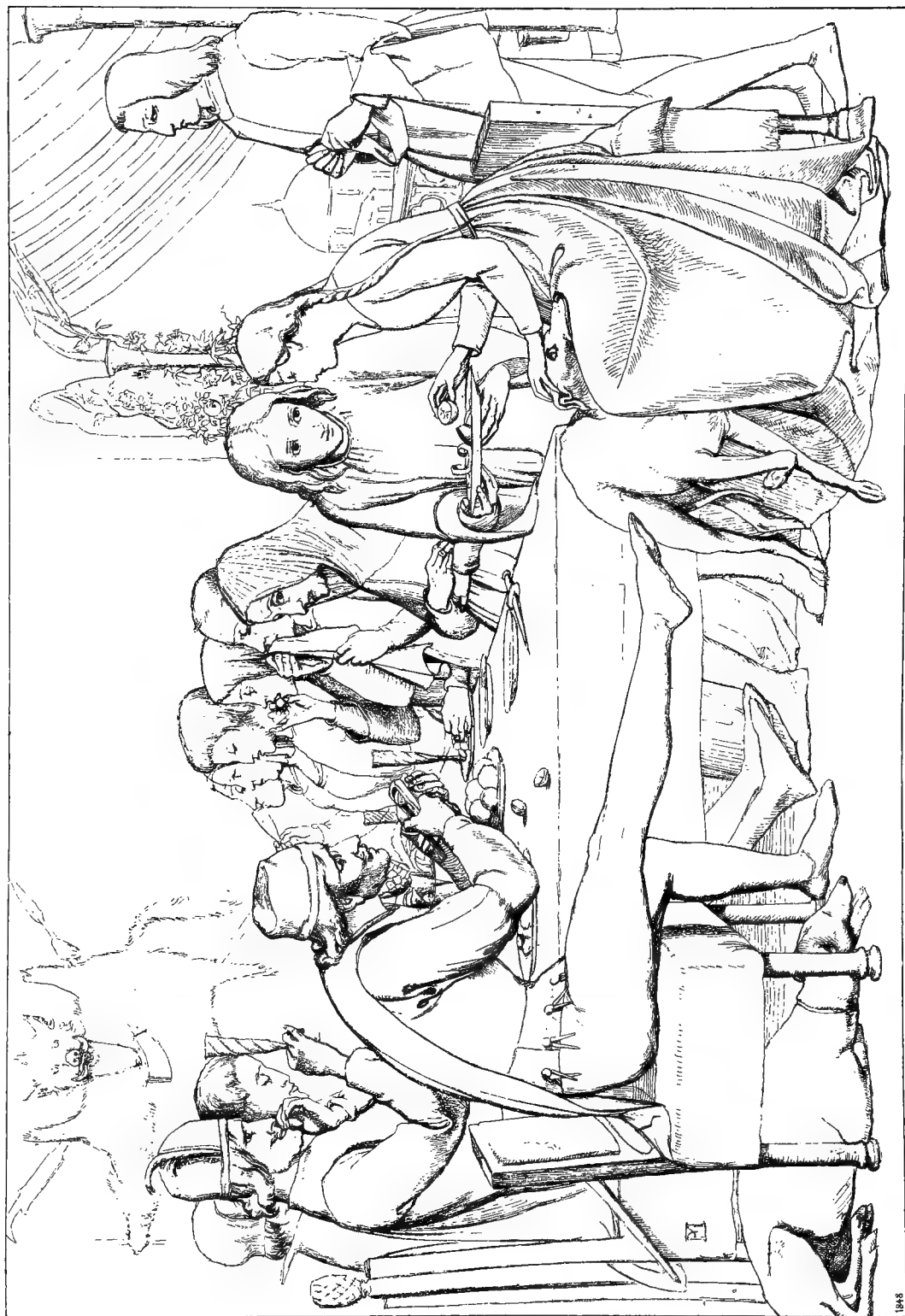
We have now brought the pre-Raphaelite story down to the summer of 1851: the *Germ* has been born and died;¹ the pictures which excited most opposition painted and exhibited; the first onslaught of criticism endured more or less patiently and successfully, and in some degree repelled, if not defeated, by Ruskin's defence. Millais has from the first been selling his pictures and laying by money. Rossetti has been up and down in spirits and cash, half a hundred times at least; now beating the town for recruits to the Brotherhood; now, to use Brown's excessively plain description, "lying, howling, on his belly in my studio," declaring that he was a fool, and showing that he was a child; and in the intervals of proselytism and despondency turning out beautiful pen-and-ink designs by the score; projecting and commencing oil-pictures by the dozen, and, having pressed all the neighbouring chambermaids into his service as models, he has changed them into queens and fairies, virgins and mediæval ladies, and such other religious or romantic material as he stood most in need of. There is really great fun for any one with the slightest sense of humour, who may happen to be a little tired of the high falutin' and frequently unintelligible praise bestowed upon this painter by his partizans, to read Rossetti's own words about his pictures, and imagine him talking of the "Annunciation" habitually as "the blessed white eyesore," and "the blessed white daub," and describing how he has put a "gilt saucer" behind the head of the angel, "which crowns the China-ese character of the picture."

All this time, too, Hunt has been labouring manfully along, under the difficulties I have described, just succeeding in keeping himself afloat by his industry and perseverance, and his readiness to turn his hand to any form of art whatever, from putting a new coat on some City man's portrait, working for a copyist in the National Gallery, retouching a fresco, or drawing for the wood-engravers. To sum up the state of affairs shortly, Millais' position is secure; Rossetti can sell his water-colours to friends as fast as he can do them, and has besides two or three steady purchasers; and Hunt alone has as yet failed either to form a *clientèle*, or to obtain any certain sale for his pictures, large or small. This was the culminating point, the last severe struggle, of this last-named painter's career. And, to add to

¹ My endeavour in this essay being to avoid as far as possible the repetition of earlier writers, I have not told the oft-repeated story of the *Germ*. This will be found by any one unacquainted with it, in the works of Mr. Hall-Caine, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, Mr. F. B. Sharp, and many others.

its intensity, Mr. Hunt, senior, appears once more upon the scene, again preaching with the kindest intention the superiority of commerce to art. It appears that the old gentleman had been severely chaffed by his City friends about the P.R.B. and his son's painting. They had even offered to bet him that the lad's pictures would be taken down from the Academy walls, a suggestion which had been actually made in one of the leading papers. We can fancy him gravely inquiring of his son whether he thought this would really be the case, and when his mind is assured on this point, expressing "his conviction as confirmed, that in this country it was useless for a man without influential and rich friends to hope to succeed as an artist. There were too many established interests to overturn, 'and you,' he said, 'have not even the party feeling in your favour of a public school.' (There had been an attempt made to get me into the Blue Coat School.) 'You have done wonders, I will maintain—more than could have been expected, but it is hopeless.'"

Then ensues one of the pleasantest incidents in the whole story, which may well serve to introduce the account of Millais, and the turn of the tide in favour of the pre-Raphaelite Brethren.

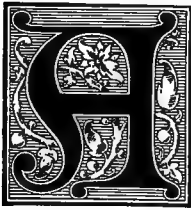


THE SUPPER AT THE HOUSE OF ISABELLA

SIR JOHN E. MILLAIS, R. A.

Facsimile of the original drawing in the possession of the author

VII.—JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS AND THE PALMY DAYS OF THE BROTHERHOOD.



S I have said, Millais was from the first in a more favourable position than that of either Hunt or Rossetti. He lived at home with his parents, who thoroughly believed in his vocation, and studied art with their fullest assent and confidence, and he had been successful in his earliest student days. At a phenomenally early age he gained admission to the Royal Academy, and before he was fifteen had taken the principal medal in the Antique School. Subsequently he gained the highest honour the Academy Schools bestow, *i.e.* the gold medal for historical painting, with a picture entitled "Pizarro before the Inca of Peru." From the close of his studentship, moreover, his black-and-white work was in request for book illustration, and the first picture painted by him after the founding of the P.R.B. was sold before it went into the Academy for £100. He was at that time only nineteen.

Despite the old Latin saying, surely here was to be seen a "happy man," one gifted with indisputable artistic genius, carefully trained from earliest youth, with sufficient means to prompt and not enough to stifle ambition, rich with friends and honours abroad, and pride, confidence, and love at home; splendid in health and physical beauty, generous in spirit, happy in temperament. And for a last best gift of all there is the testimony of Hunt that between himself and Rossetti stood Millais midway, "showing a rare combination of artistic faculty with an amount of *sterling English commonsense*. And moreover he was in those early days, beyond almost any one with whom I have been acquainted, full of a generous, quick enthusiasm; a spirit on fire with eagerness to seize whatever he saw to be good, which shone out in every line of his face and made it, as Rossetti once said, look sometimes like the face of an angel."

Such was the boy who came to Hunt's assistance when his father, overborne by ridicule and the opinion of his acquaintances, expressed his conviction as confirmed, that "in this country it was useless for a man without influential and rich friends to hope to succeed as an artist." For some time longer Hunt struggles on despite his father's opinion. He tries book illustration, but the publisher declines his drawings; his old resource of portrait-painting, whereby in earlier days he had gained sufficient to defray the cost of models, etc., for his subject pictures, fails him, and he becomes so reduced in means that once "when I had a letter lying written before me I could not tell where to find a penny for the stamp." So he decides to follow his father's advice, give up painting, and, going "for a twelvemonth to a good yeoman uncle for instruction as a farmer, at the end of that time to emigrate to Canada, or the Antipodes (it was still at this date customary to so designate Australia) to take my place as a settler." Of course he tells Millais, and Millais will have none of such a project. He is as confident for his friend as for himself (when was he *not* confident about anything or anybody?), and he "announced that he had saved £500, and that I should have all of it, little by little, as I wanted it. My reply was, 'What do you think your father and mother would think of me?' And when he reminded me that I had to go to him in the morning, I said, 'Mind you don't say a word of what we have been speaking about.'" The next day, however, Hunt goes to breakfast with Millais, and when the servant opens the door, "the good couple burst out of the sitting-room, crying, 'Is that Hunt?' and saying, 'Come in here! Jack has been telling us all about his plan, and he has our fullest concurrence.' I had quite made up my mind not to give in, but it was impossible in the face of such goodness; and I am prouder now to acknowledge my indebtedness than even my friend is shy to have his generosity published." Then, by some quaint association of ideas perhaps, Hunt goes down to Surrey with Millais, and paints "The Hireling Shepherd," and they remain together all the summer: Millais engaged upon the background of the "Ophelia." From this time forward, as if Millais' good fortune had, as gamblers say, "changed the luck," Hunt's success becomes quickly assured. His picture of "Valentine and Sylvia," laughed at in London, is sent to Liverpool, and there, though it receives much "abuse" and "stupid rudeness," is rewarded by the Liverpool Council with a £50 prize: a proceeding which immediately results in its purchase by an Irishman who (with true national rashness) had never seen the work, for 150 or 200 guineas,¹ of which £10 are to be paid monthly, and 60 guineas to be represented by a picture of Danby's. So the background to "The Hireling Shepherd" is finished, and that to "The Light of the World," and when Hunt returns permanently from Surrey, he has painted what are perhaps the two best

¹ Hunt does not remember which.

pictures of his life ; he is in funds and favour ; Royal Academicians ask him to dine ! And behold, most wonderful of all, the next Academy Exhibition sees his work for the first time "on the line." And all because of that breakfast in Gower Street and "Jack's" help.

Well, we must not speak with such levity of a Baronet and a Royal Academician : a prince of art, as the society journals delight to term him. But we may be glad to remember that two of the finest pieces of work which Sir John Millais ever executed, the landscape and background portions of the "Ophelia" and "The Huguenot," were painted during this companionship with Hunt in Surrey, and it is not straining probabilities to suggest that the infinite laborious toil which Hunt put into the two pictures above named, counted for much in the inspiration of his comrade. Certainly at this period Hunt's power of labour was prodigious : for nearly two months he used to paint by the light of a candle upon "The Light of the World," from 9 P.M. to 5 A.M., sitting in an orchard in an open shed made of hurdles. At five he would go to bed, sleep till ten, and devote the rest of the day to drawing out the work for the evening. I fancy, however, these hours did not often occur, for during these months, as has been said, he was also doing a considerable amount of work upon "The Hireling Shepherd," and it is perfectly impossible this could have been the case if he had been at work often in the manner indicated.

In fact, whatever Holman Hunt has achieved has been achieved by sheer industry and unremitting toil. He does not paint, even now, easily : the work is beaten out, toiled over, struggled with. There is no spontaneity : there never has been any either in his drawing, his composition, or his brushwork. On the other hand, his colour, always striking, is in some pictures really beautiful ; his drawing is as solid and good as it is elaborated and matter-of-fact ; and from the intellectual side his pictures have great merit, and from the dramatic are uniformly effective. I should be inclined to place an imaginative realism as the highest quality of his art ; it appears to me that by dint of long thinking over the subject chosen, and considering its possibilities, not only of drama but of interesting detail, he does finally succeed in creating a sort of half-prosaic, half-imaginative world, which those who look at his pictures can wholly believe in, though they may not altogether like. And if we can by any means grant Mr. Hunt his point of view, there is little left to be said but in praise. For very certainly this painter will give us no excuse in not realising his conception. He may possibly, as on a certain celebrated occasion, forget the sawdust in his carpenter's shop, but he will not spare us one curl of the shavings, one tooth of the saw, one fold of the Virgin Mary's gown, one bead of her necklace.

The picture of "The Huguenot" marks a very important stage in Millais' painting. Its popularity was immediate and assured, and probably no other picture by this artist has been so frequently reproduced; but that is by no means all that renders it important—the composition marks the first application of the pre-Raphaelite theory to a subject of modern interest and modern sentiment; for, despite the title and the costume of the lovers, this was essentially a modern English picture. Moreover, this was Millais' first attempt at sentiment—the first time he showed that power of depicting emotional expression which was for many years subsequently the prevailing charm of his painting. Over "The Huguenot," he, to use a French expression, "found himself," and students of painting will not need to be reminded how many variations he afterwards played upon the same theme. The idea of the scene was not improbably due to Holman Hunt's "Claudio and Isabella," which had been finished and sold to Egg, the Royal Academician, about eighteen months previously, and it is interesting to remember that the quotation affixed by Hunt to this latter picture might almost as appropriately stand as the motto for "The Huguenot," which is indeed but another illustration of one who prefers "death" to "shamed life."¹

This brings us to the consideration of that question of which so much has been written, the change which the art of Millais has undergone during the past twenty years. Is it, or is it not, an abandonment of his old theories, a contradiction of them? Or is it only a logical development and extension of pre-Raphaelitism? I do not press my interpretation of the facts, but I am inclined to believe that this theory, like all other theories, was never of much account to the young artist, any more than it is to him now. Quick to feel and eager to experience, was he ever capable of deep thought, logical deduction, and long-enduring conviction? Was not in him the actual technical success of handicraft always a greater thing than the expression of any imaginative idea, the realisation of any definite creed? One thing is indubitable, and that is that, with advancing power and increasing age, a painter who is originally thoughtful and imaginative is little likely to fail *persistently* in those departments of his art: and has not the failure of Millais in these respects been so complete as to be even painful, and is not the change, the intellectual and emotional failure, to be traced to the very time when the influence upon him of his brother pre-Raphaelites and Ruskin faded? We all know the old fairy stories wherein the happy princess is endowed with every good gift, save

¹ There is another story of the origin of this picture which attributes it to a subject thought of by Hunt, but never painted, of an incident in the Wars of the Roses—two lovers of the opposing factions plucking red and white roses in a garden. Hunt is said to have told Millais of this idea, and Millais chancing to go to the opera of *The Huguenots*, to have adapted it to that subject.

one, the want of which renders her future years unpleasantly eventful—was this one supreme gift of the imaginative faculty the secret want of Millais' art, and what looked like imagination in the youth, merely the reflection of that quality in his fellow-workers? There are many considerations which have led the present writer to answer these questions in the affirmative, and in view of the importance of this artist, and the many great and admirable qualities of his art, he may perhaps be excused for mentioning some of these.

One of the chief, is the facility Millais has always shown in entering into the ideas of others, and the great success he gained from the first as a book-illustrator. This was particularly evident in the magnificent series of designs he furnished for Anthony Trollope's novels, especially *Framley Parsonage*, *The Small House at Allington*, and *Orley Farm*. In these most beautiful drawings, the nature of the artist displays itself evidently as in complete sympathy with the spirit of the writer. The books are full of clear, if somewhat thin, types of English character, and the illustrations are the perfect echo of the letterpress. Sir Peregrine Orme and Lady Mason, the Judge, that somewhat uppish young gentleman, Felix Graham, young Peregrine Orme, and Madeleine Graham,—Millais has caught the very idiosyncrasy of them all; they exhale the spirit of Trollope, though the painter's sense of grace and beauty is also evident in every line. But neither in artist nor novelist is the work imaginative or ideal. It has no heights or depths; pleasing us always, we feel it to be the apotheosis of the ordinary. All imaginative power is in essence, revealing, and strikes those who see or hear it for the first time with a shock of question, if not displeasure. We are placed in a strange world, listening to an unknown tongue, and ask ourselves whether such unaccustomed things as those which are placed before us can be true and admirable? or whether the light through which we are shown them is not one which has never shone? True, the facts may be ordinary enough, but they are there touched to no ordinary issue: a new element has been introduced which makes our oldest friend a stranger, our most familiar scene astonishing. No one will assert that in these his early black-and-white drawings Millais takes us to any such undiscovered country, or does more than realise with very minute and admirable dexterity, the very obvious meaning of an author who, perhaps more than any other, prided himself upon being clearly intelligible, un-hysterical, and consistent.

Again, in the illustrations to the Tennyson and to the *Parables*, the same treatment, practical, clear, full of grace and beauty, and solidly realistic of its subject-matter, is continually met with in the Millais designs. The woman sweeping the house for the lost piece

of silver, searches diligently with broom and candle; the "Evil One sowing Tares," is just a very diabolical-looking old Jew in a red gaberdine, sowing in a field at twilight. "Edward Gray" turns away duly, as the poet says, from sweet Emma Moreland's somewhat direct questioning, and so on throughout the list. All are delightful, all are beautiful with truth of keen visual perception, artistic spirit, and knowledge, but the imaginative quality is hardly to be found in a single instance.

Yet these designs are, if we accept Ruskin's definition, the most definitely and essentially pre-Raphaelite compositions which any member of the Brotherhood or sympathiser with the school has produced. They *do* one and all present their subjects with the simplicity and reality which were the distinguishing qualities of early Italian art. Also in this presentation there is to be found nothing strained or morbid, as in Rossetti; nothing harsh or disagreeable, as was too often the case with Holman Hunt; nothing bizarre or awkward, as occurs in several of Madox Brown's pictures. They have Ruskin's idea of pre-Raphaelitism, but no mannerisms derived from the study of mediæval art, and are clearly, unaffectedly modern; failing no whit in truth, they fail as little in beauty. It was my good fortune when quite a lad to stay in a house where, on the drawing-room table (as was the custom in those days), there lay some large gift-books, and amongst them a folio volume entitled *The Cornhill Gallery*, which contained careful reprints of these drawings, and I think it was to this fact that I owed the sympathy and admiration I have ever since felt for Millais' genius, and for that view of art which was inculcated by him; a view in which pictorial beauty appeared to be considered in terms of truth and simplicity, to depend ultimately on its correspondence with facts of nature and life, and to be absolutely superior in the attainment of these objects to any possible shortcoming in the character of its subject-matter, or to almost any breach of the conventional rules of art.

How it is that, with all our talk about art—*some* of which must be sincere—no one cares to-day to think about this grand collection of drawings, or hold them up as models for our young painters, is to me inexplicable. From the point of view of craftsmanship alone, the work is a model of excellence, both Rossetti's and Millais' pen and pencil work being even in their youth entirely admirable, and beyond all comparison superior to any of which we can boast in England to-day.

With reference to this lack of imagination in Millais, think how many times he has taken as the subject of his picture a man and woman standing face to face! At the first effort I can recall seven such, "The Huguenot," "The Black Brunswicker," "Trust Me," "Yes or No," "The Master of Ravenswood," "Effie Deans," "The Knight Errant,"

and perhaps "The Proscribed Royalist" should be included, and of course, if we included drawings, the number would be more than doubled. Still more numerous would be the pictures in which there is only one female figure (I am not including portraits of girls and children): indeed of late years such designs have formed the majority of his painting, and the slightest addition of significant accuracy has availed to change the model from "Cinderella" to "Caller Herrin'," or from "Dropped from the Nest" to "Violets." In my own mind I put these latest pictures outside the artist's work proper, and that for the very simple reason that the majority of them have to all appearance been executed for the sake of reproduction in colour-printing, have been in fact sublimated "pot-boilers." Nearly the whole number have appeared either in Christmas numbers of the *Graphic* or *Illustrated*, and the dealers can of course afford to pay an extreme price for such designs, as so much of the money returns in the value of the copyright. An artist has of course the right to sell his art to the best advantage; but if, when he has gained his reputation, he chooses to apparently consider the question of ready and profitable sale before that of producing the best work of which he is capable, he must not be surprised if those who have the greatest faith in his powers, are the least inclined to discuss their latest exercise.

Perhaps one word should be said here as to the Millais landscapes, in which our painter's imaginative faculty is generally at its weakest, though to these he usually gives a poetical title. In the early days the landscape backgrounds to his figure pictures, notably to the "Sir Isumbras," the "Autumn Leaves," the "Ophelia," and "The Woodman's Daughter," were very fine in colour, very powerful and significant, and several large landscapes of the middle period, as, for instance, the "Scotch Firs," and "Over the Hills and Far Away," and in a lesser degree, "Flowing to the River," and "Flowing to the Sea," had, if not poetical excellence, a certain grandeur of style which justified their size, and what occasionally seems to be their indifference as to the subject selected. But the later work, *i.e.* that of the past ten years, has been absolutely motiveless, so far, at all events, as the present writer can perceive. Sir John now seems to stroll out from his Highland home and settle himself down in the first convenient spot, and there he cuts a great slice out of Nature with perfect content and satisfaction. Of course the result is *something*: it is finely drawn, well painted, occasionally good in colour, frequently delicate in atmosphere, but the result is not a great landscape picture: sometimes even not a picture at all, but a study, by which I mean that it lacks motive, dignity, and unity, and appears to have been unselected, and irrelevant to the artist's personality.

All this, though, belongs to a later date than that of which I am

speaking—1854—when Millais was but twenty-five, Rossetti twenty-six, and Holman Hunt twenty-seven. It is as well to keep these dates in mind, and also that of the foundation of the Brotherhood, which took place in 1848.

The works by the Brotherhood which were being achieved or exhibited in this year of 1854 were the chief typically pre-Raphaelite pictures. They were—by Rossetti, "Found," and another oil-picture which I cannot trace, but which was commissioned by M'Cracken; by Hunt, "The Light of the World," "The Hireling Shepherd," and "The Awakened Conscience"; by Millais, the "Ophelia" and "The Huguenot."¹

The "Found," of which a reproduction (of the original pen-and-ink sketch) is here given, is extremely interesting for several reasons. In the first place we have, as I have shown above, Madox Brown's distinct remembrance of the carrying out in its execution of the pre-Raphaelite principles which Rossetti soon after definitely abandoned in his own practice. Then the subject is the only purely modern one, realistically treated, which this painter ever attempted; and the picture therefore stands alone as evidence of what he could have done in this direction. Lastly—and here I would ask my readers to examine the design for themselves, and test the truth of my assertion—the composition is unique in its demonstration of the influence of Holman Hunt over his more brilliant comrade. "Found" is, in fact, but a pendant to "The Awakened Conscience"—the third act of that drama of sin and shame the whole course of which was afterwards told in Rossetti's poem of "Jenny." The similarity in both feeling and manner between the two pictures is too plain to be mistaken, and both belong to the dramatic rather than the lyrical side of art—a side which, with the exception of a few pen-and-ink designs, and one or two water-colour drawings, was henceforward to receive no illustration from Rossetti. I know no other design by him in which beauty of arrangement and colour is deliberately sacrificed to "the telling of a story," but of Hunt it might almost be said that such sacrifice is the first characteristic of his art, and it is probably for this reason that he alone has always adhered so steadily to the pre-Raphaelite theory, finding in the multiplication, the elaboration, and the invention of appropriate and fully-realised detail, the greatest aid to his intellectual purpose. I will not enter into any description of the progress, abandonment, and long-subsequent taking-up again of this "Found" composition. W. M. Rossetti tells us that it was finally worked upon in 1881, and Mr. Fairfax Murray, who knows more about the chronology of Rossetti's work than any one living, asserts it was greatly injured by re-painting in

¹ Millais painted the "Vale of Rest" subsequently after an interval of work executed in the more conventional manner.



M^{rs} ROSSETTI WHEN MISS SIDDAL, DRAWING

D. G. ROSSETTI

Facsimile of a pen drawing in the possession of the author

that year. There is no doubt that the present state of the picture is unfinished, and, so far as colour goes, extremely unsatisfactory. The composition, however, and the skill with which the meaning of the story is made irresistibly clear, leave nothing to be desired, and there might be truly said here in the celebrated words of Ruskin, written of "The Awakened Conscience," that this is one of those pictures which are powerful "to meet full in the front the moral evil of the age in which they were painted, to waken into mercy the cruel thoughtlessness of youth, and subdue the severities of judgment into the sanctity of compassion."

It is strange to note that in this very year when for once Rossetti took Hunt's practice as his model, and painted for the last time on the strictly pre-Raphaelite theory, his friendship for Ruskin began. Up to the spring of 1854, painter and critic were still unknown to one another, and on that date Rossetti writes to Madox Brown as follows:

"M'Cracken (the picture-dealer) of course sent my drawing to Ruskin, who the other day wrote me an incredible letter about it, remaining mine respectfully (!!) and wanting to call.¹ I of course stroked him down in my answer, and yesterday he came. . . . He seems in a mood to make my fortune."

The intercourse of Ruskin and Rossetti lasted, with occasional breaks, from 1854 to 1866, and was undoubtedly of the greatest service to the artist. Not only did the great writer continually purchase Rossetti's water-colours, but he induced others to do so; and apparently also Ruskin supplied the funds for the publication of Rossetti's first complete book, *i.e.* the *Early Italian Poets* (published in 1861). This volume was a comparative failure, as in seven years only half the edition was sold: Rossetti's share amounting to £8:11:8. Ruskin also behaved, as is fully admitted by W. M. Rossetti in his memoir, with munificent generosity towards Miss Siddal (afterwards Mrs. Rossetti), and was perhaps most helpful of all in the respect that he appreciated and gave full scope to Rossetti's imaginative art, at the same time that he refused to play the part, too common in the painter's life, of a blindly admiring and universally tolerant friend. I have said too common a part, and the abrupt termination of this, and many other Rossetti friendships, is only too certainly to be ascribed to the intolerance with which the painter received all criticism and advice, and even all help, unless it came in the exact shape, amount, and moment which he desired. From the first he was surrounded by a band of too admiring relatives, too enthusiastic friends, too sycophantic admirers. Ruskin is quite wrong in asserting that at the schools of the Royal Academy he was

¹ The notes of exclamation are Rossetti's.

unpopular and "hissed by the students."¹ Holman Hunt says explicitly that Rossetti had even there "a following of noisy students," and from that day to the day of his death no man had ever more devoted and more numerous friends. Unfortunately very many of these were willing to take him on his own terms, and the continuity of such experience gradually made him almost intolerably insolent and exacting in his demands upon others. Moreover, it is impossible to read even his brother's memoir without finding upon almost every page some evidence of the reckless disregard he had for the feelings of any one who had in any way offended or thwarted him, or even, if the full truth is to be told, ceased to be of service to him. His earliest purchaser is, for instance, M'Cracken, originally a shipbroker, and we find him paying Rossetti nearly 50 per cent more than the stipulated price for a water-colour, buying his first oil-picture, and for two years continually helping Rossetti in all sorts of ways. Well, M'Cracken fails in business, and writes to tell D. G. R. that he cannot give him the money he had arranged, and, says Madox Brown, "Rossetti wrote a sonnet on M'Cracken in great bitterness when he could not supply him with any more tin."²

That is only one amongst many examples of the painter's intense egotism: he seemed in certain moods to absolutely revel in insulting those with whom he had business relations, and one consequence of this procedure was that he naturally fell in after-life into the hands of those who were content to put up with much, in order to make more.

From the beginning of his career, however, it is evident that a very keen desire for money, and a very sharp eye for a bargain, were prominent elements in the painter's character. In his brother's memoir, carefully as the facts are arranged, we find the artist over and over again insisting upon his monetary bond: putting the money in the first place and his art in the second. He sees a pretty girl in the country, where he is stopping at a friend's house, and his first idea is, could he get her to sit "and knock fifty guineas out of her." He paints his friend's head, and doubts whether it might not be worth more if he were to put a halo behind it and call it Christ. He advances his prices over and over again till even his warmest friends and richest patrons have to bargain with him, and tie him down strictly before they can give him a commission, and when he has received and undertaken these commissions, we find him frequently unready to complete them as stipulated, or give them up.

¹ The origin of this mistake was that long after the three P.R.B.s had left the Royal Academy Schools, and when their pictures were being exhibited and attacked most violently by the Press, the mention of their names by one of the Professors was received with hisses. At the time of their studentship, however, both Rossetti and Millais were extremely popular, and Hunt does not appear to have been otherwise.

² A very bitter sonnet this was, a parody of Tennyson's "The Kraken."

I believe it to be within the truth if I say that there must be a score of instances given *in his brother's book* alone, wherein Rossetti undertakes work for a certain stipulated sum, and receives an increased price for it before it is finished, or wherein he fails to execute the commissions he has accepted.

W. M. Rossetti's account of the matter, that his brother "was not likely to neglect his own interest in a bargain; and indeed he constantly laid his plans well in such matters, and effected them with tenacity and acuteness," certainly does not overstate the case; and the complicated transactions of later years with regard to the purchase and re-purchase of his larger pictures, the execution of replicas, and the agency which Rossetti established with a gentleman of "versatile resource" and "attractive personal qualities" for the disposal of his pictures in the most favourable manner, are, if not models of business dealing, at least abundantly demonstrative that the artist thoroughly understood and agreed with the principle of "caveat emptor."

There is a sufficient reason for stating these facts without reserve, for they, and they alone, sufficiently account for much of what is undoubtedly the very indifferent painting turned out of this artist's studio in his later years.¹ It is very desirable that there should be put on record before it is too late a *careful account of those works which were executed wholly or principally by Rossetti's assistants*: great harm has been, and will be done to the artist's reputation, and a great injustice is committed towards the picture-purchasing public, by the sale of many of the Rossetti pictures which find their way into the market nowadays. Of course it is hoping against hope that those who are interested will reveal these secrets, but the public may at least be clearly warned to this effect, that if they purchase a Rossetti picture which is known to be a replica, or which is not known to have an authentic history, there is but a great probability that they are purchasing the work of one or other of Mr. Rossetti's assistants—of whom Mr. Dunn was the chief; and this is especially the case with the large red chalk drawings on coloured paper, of which I have reason to believe there are large numbers spurious. Some which I have seen sold at Christie's certainly were never done by Rossetti at all—others have been worked up from sketches and failures. How these drawings got into the market, the intimates of Rossetti may be able to guess, *that* does not concern the public, but their being there is a matter for serious consideration.

I have said at the beginning of these notes that I did not intend to touch upon that part of Rossetti's life which could give pain to his friends and relations, but as his brother himself alludes to his use of chloral, and as all his biographers have had to mention that fact, I

¹ Of course the effect of his continual chloral-taking was partly responsible.

may venture to point out that much of the above-mentioned work of inferior quality may well have been partially executed by him of late years, however great the subsequent alteration and addition ; and also that in such a state of health, and under the influence of such a narcotic, an artist would be little likely to consider what became of these tentative sketches which, under other circumstances, would have been destroyed or at most carefully retained for his own use.¹ It was in 1867 that Rossetti first took chloral in any quantity, and most of the drawings above alluded to will be found to be executed after that date.

I do not intend to say more upon this point than that the purchasers of Rossetti must guard themselves in the future if they would be certain of the authenticity of their possessions, and critics must be very slow to judge the quality of this master's art from many of the examples which are put forth as by his hand.

I have now shown with perhaps too great detail the character of the early artistic careers and personalities of the two chief leaders of the P.R.B. The third, Sir John Millais, has been less minutely dealt with, partly because that artist's work quickly separated itself from the influence of the Brotherhood, and is now indistinguishable, save for the genius of its author, from the ordinary Academic painting. Also we must remember that Millais' early life, owing to the causes I have mentioned, was less eventful, less harassed, than those of his future associates, and he has cared to give to the world no record of its aspirations and incidents. Where Rossetti has been made the subject of book after book, more or less personally reminiscent, where Hunt has told us in such detail as occurs in a previous chapter, the story of the desperate struggle he had with parents and fortune before he could even get leave to paint, Millais has been content to remain silent, and let his record be read alone in the prizes gained as a boy, the pictures painted as a man, the wealth and honours which surround his age. But a few days ago a friend who has known him for forty years told me the following story, which, whether true or not, is typical enough to merit repetition.

Here it is. A short time since Sir John Millais was walking with an acquaintance past the "Round Pond" in Kensington Gardens, when he suddenly stopped and said, "How extraordinary it is to think I once fished for sticklebacks in this very pond ! And now, here I am a great man, a baronet, with a fine house and plenty of money and everything my heart could desire"—and so happily he walked ahead !

Well, who shall say that the triumph is not natural—is not even justified ? But who shall deny that it is, for so great an artist, a trifle

¹ I have good reason to believe that a considerable number of these were "conveyed," the wise it call,⁵ from the painter without his knowledge.

mistaken, a trifle pitiful, and more than a trifle Philistine? The success in such matters as those mentioned, contrasts almost harshly with that quiet grave at Birchington-on-Sea, wherein Rossetti lies in a last home made beautiful by the "abiding love of a few true-hearted friends"; and with the out-of-the-way "Lodge" at Fulham whence Hunt still sends us every few years a picture—the best that he has it in him to give! "I am that I am," wrote Swinburne once, is the best reply (of the artist) to any "impertinence of praise or blame," but he did not mean the I of a great house, a title, and a big balance at one's banker's. Is it necessary to point out what was his meaning—or how the phrase applies in the present context? Actually, was not Millais a greater man when he was painting the "Eve of St. Agnes" in a back room in Gower Street forty years ago? And perhaps his "balance," rightly considered, was even greater in those days, when he kept his money in a drawer in his bedroom, and offered it all to his friend to prevent his giving up the "fight for art." Such an old, insoluble question—this of success in the world's opinion, in the tangible facts of life, as compared with the success of being true to the light within you, faithful, if need be unto death, to your ideal life. The "big house," I fancy, must always seem a little over-large if the old friends come not there; the splendid studio, but dim and shadowy if none of the "light of other days" illumine it with the softness of memory and the brightness of youth. Who shall hold the balance justly in such a case? Shall we bid the vision remain with us, and let the reality "down the wind," or shall we "take the cash and let the credit go"?

I saw in early youth two lives, lived side by side, which silently asked this question. One content, successful, material, high in the world's respect, almost triumphant—and the other, striving after an unfulfilled ideal, unrecognised and suffering, but shining brightly with a steady light of noble pride and invincible resolution; with self-sacrifice and truth. No after years have taught me to forget that lesson, or made me uncertain as to which was the *successful* life. The present writer is therefore a prejudiced witness, and must have his testimony regarded with consequent suspicion.

A hundred apologies for this my five-and-twentieth digression. By Hercules! I will for the future stick to my "subject" like a Scotch lawyer.

VIII.—THE LESSER PRE-RAPHAELITES AND THEIR FRIENDS.



THESE "people of importance" who filled up the large Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (seven in all, like the family of Wordsworth's most irritating child), who were they, and what did they for "the honour of the family"? Their names were :

JAMES COLLINSON.

WILLIAM MICHAEL ROSSETTI.

FREDERICK GEORGE STEPHENS.

THOMAS WOOLNER, (now) R.A.

Collinson was a painter, and was afterwards succeeded as a P.R.B. by Walter Deverell. Woolner, of course, was the celebrated sculptor and poet of that name. F. G. Stephens started as a painter, but afterwards became an art critic, and W. M. Rossetti, after some coquetting with art, also took to criticism, chiefly literary, though he for some time acted as art critic to the *Spectator*.

Collinson seems to have been the weakest member of the society—a little bit of a painter, a little bit of a poet, and alternately being converted, and perverted, from one form of religious belief to another. W. M. Rossetti lets him down as gently as possible with the mild observation that he "did not make the mark which in the early days of Præraphaelitism¹ his colleagues had hoped for," and "is now perhaps almost forgotten." Holman Hunt calls him dull and sleepy, and compares him to the fat boy in *Pickwick* in all but size; and Madox Brown dismissed him (in conversation with me) as having "had nothing much to recommend him"! In the account Woolner gave me of the association, Collinson's work is described as not being "much in the spirit of the others." Therefore he can hardly be said, on

¹ Of the many ways of printing this word I generally follow in quotations that adopted by the special author.

the balance of testimony, to have added to the strength of the P.R. body, of which he was the first recruit, though Hunt speaks with some admiration of "The Charity Boy's Debut," a picture exhibited by Collinson in 1848. On account of this work, Rossetti "declared that Collinson was a born stunner, and at once enrolled Collinson as one who wanted only the enthusiasm we had to make him a great force in the battle, and accordingly he was told that he had to put the secret initials on his works, to attend our monthly meetings, and to receive (and entertain) us in his turn." This last part of the P.R.B.'s proceedings—no unimportant one, for all the members appear to have had particularly good appetites, both for talk and supper—Collinson appears to have faithfully carried out; and Hunt adds that, though, owing to a liberal allowance from home, he was able to provide "quite a conventional entertainment," he invariably went to sleep at the beginning of the evening, and had to be woken up at its close. On the whole, he must have been a harmless, good-tempered, vacillating individual, with a secret longing for a sort of decorous Bohemianism—a Bohemianism as strictly limited as Mrs. Dodd's desire of "safe glory" for her son Edward.¹

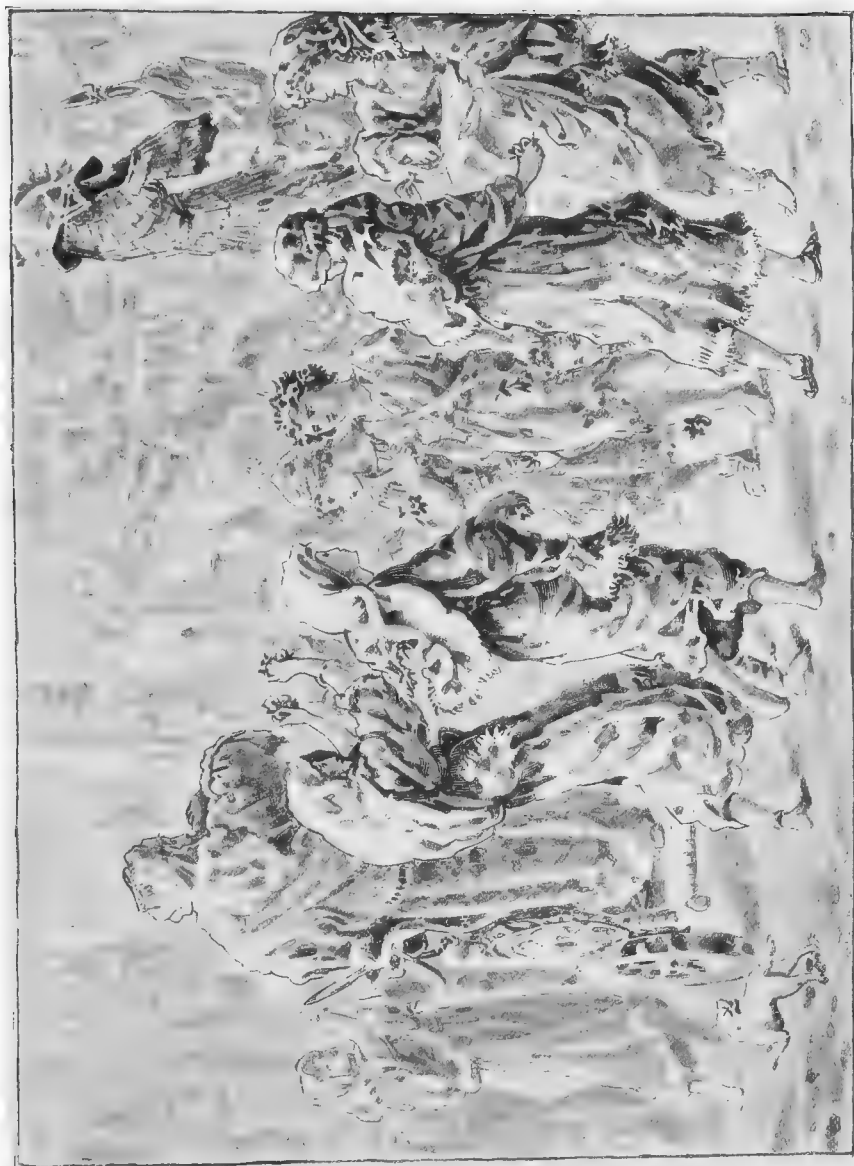
As the "Brotherhood" developed, it seems to have been a favourite amusement of the members to "draw" Collinson—to hunt him up out of his bed at unholy hours, and take him still half-asleep for long walks by moonlight, or stand under his windows howling P.R.B. till his dragoness of a landlady, "six feet in height," came out with a candle to ask if they "didn't know Mr. Collinson was asleep?" On one occasion Collinson "came to his window piteously entreating to be left to sleep, but we pointed out that we had chosen the northern course solely on his account, and that we knew what was good for him better than he did himself. He gave in, dressed himself, and came with us on a walk—worth remembering even now for its many delights of lovely moonlit heath and common and village, with the whole on our return exchanged for ever-increasing dawn and sunrise. I think our poor victim slept all the way, leaning on one or another of us, and I must confess that neither this nor any treatment we adopted for his good seemed thoroughly to wake him up. When I first returned from the little continental tour, I lodged in the same house with him at Brompton for about a month. There even in the day he was asleep over the fire with his model waiting idle, earning his shilling per hour all the time; and as the home remittance for some reason stopped, it seemed at one time as if bankruptcy must come on like an armed man. But at the last moment he unexpectedly waked² up, sent in his resignation as a Pre-Raphaelite

¹ Glory by all means, glory by the pailful, but safe glory if you please! or she would have none of it.

² I do not alter this slip of the pen, as I have throughout all quotations thought it better to give the exact text.

Brother—ungrateful man!—sold his lay figure and painting material by forced sale, and departed to Stonyhurst to graduate. It is but fair to give the further history of this Pre-Raphaelite Brother. At the end of a twelvemonth or so he abandoned the idea of conventual or priestly life, again took to painting and I believe executed many very creditable pictures of a modest character. He subsequently abjured Romanism, and died some eight years ago, very much respected by those who knew him best, and with less, I am sure, to reproach himself for than many more brilliant men may have at the end of their days." Collinson wrote a long, blank-verse poem in the *Germ* named "The Child Jesus," and W. M. Rossetti alludes to one ambitious, in some respects very laudable, "Præraphaelite" attempt, entitled "St. Elizabeth of Hungary," but where this picture is I do not know, nor have I ever seen it described.

Thomas Woolner, though an original P.R.B., was so rather from the intellectual, and poetical point of view, than from the artistic. It was no doubt Rossetti's poetic genius which attracted him, and his work in connection with the Brotherhood was almost wholly of a literary character. In his view of the association he minimises both its influence, and the enthusiasm and conviction of the leaders, and his own account of the way in which his name was associated with the movement shows that from his point of view, at all events, the connection was both slight and accidental. He tells me, for instance, that "about the time the movement began—1848-1849—I wrote a poem called 'My Beautiful Lady,' and its sequel, 'My Lady in Death,' which Rossetti declared to be written on strict pre-Raphaelite principles, and they complimentarily placed them first, in the first number of the *Germ*, published January 1850; and as these poems were a good deal criticised at the time, my name became in this way associated with the movement." The whole poem of "My Beautiful Lady" did not come out in the *Germ*, but was subsequently published and extremely successful. The whole story of the *Germ*, its contributors, and contents, has been frequently told. Acting, therefore, on the principle observed throughout these notes, I shall only here refer readers to the excellent account given in Mr. W. B. Sharpe's book on Rossetti, the slighter sketch in Mr. W. M. Rossetti's account of his brother's poems and pictures, and in the *Reminiscences of Rossetti*, by Mr. Hall Caine. This last is by far the most readable account of the poet-painter with which I am acquainted, though it deals entirely with the later years of his life, Mr. Caine having, I believe, never seen Rossetti till three years before his death, though their correspondence dated from 1878. It is perhaps worth mentioning that both Coventry Patmore and Madox Brown contributed to the first number of the *Germ*, though their poems appeared anonymously.



THE TRIUMPH OF SAUL AND DAVID

T. M. ROOKE

The important point to be noted in the contents of the *Germ*, is that though it passed for, and indeed in a sense was the official journal of pre-Raphaelitism, yet we find that of the three pre-Raphaelite leaders one, Millais, never contributed to it at all ; another, Holman Hunt, only contributed a drawing to the first number ; and the third, Rossetti, confined his contributions to poems entirely unconnected with, and irrespective of any P.R. theory. From first to last—not a very long way, for the journal only lived through four numbers—the dogmatic enunciation of the supposed P.R.B. theories and principles is left to the hands of minor contributors, some of whose very names are unknown to the majority of artistic readers, and only two of whom were members of the Brotherhood. The Messrs. J. L. Tupper and John Orchard are the authors of two dogmatic papers on “The Subject in Art” and a “Dialogue on Art,” and a third is contributed by John Seward, who is now known as F. G. Stephens. Madox Brown sends one on the “Structure of an Historical Picture,” Coventry Patmore, a “Criticism of Macbeth,” and the other critical papers are from the pen of W. M. Rossetti, and are devoted only to poetry.

It is thus the incontrovertible fact that, however eager in proselytising Rossetti may have been, he was not in any way eager in enunciating in print the supposed P.R.B. principles, and neither was Hunt nor Millais. How are we to interpret this silence of the oracles ? It cannot evidently be accidental ; and was not the modesty of young painters who thought their principles could be better expressed by literary craftsmen, for Rossetti was at this time beyond all doubt a more capable writer than any other contributor to the periodical, and besides the failing of undue modesty was not to be laid to the charge of any of the P.R.B. It appears to me that we can hardly escape from the inference that if these men were silent at this time it was because they were already too doubtful of their own aims and principles, or it may be too little agreed between themselves of what those principles and aims were, to dare to set them forth in a definite and permanent form, and the absence of Millais and Holman Hunt shows that the *Germ* really was chiefly a whim of Rossetti's, who indeed, with the assistance of his sister Christina, his brother William, his sleepy convert Collinson, and his teacher Madox Brown, practically wrote the whole journal. The three Rossettis indeed wrote no less than thirty-eight separate poems and articles out of the four numbers. But not one of these enunciates the P.R. theory, and only one deals with the question of the painter's aim, and that incidentally, and in an indirect and symbolic manner. This contribution is the allegoric story of “Hand and Soul,” by D. G. R., from which, so far as Rossetti may be considered to be expressing his own point of view, we find him at direct variance with the principles laid down in the dogmatic papers above alluded to, by J. L. Tupper, Orchard, and Stephens.

But enough of the *Germ*. The periodical has been criticised to death; its interest was not in criticism but, poetry, and with that we have here nothing to do.

After Collinson we come to Mr. F. G. Stephens, who was at this time endeavouring to be a painter, but, as Woolner says, "his tendency being towards literature, he gave up pictures for books, and by his writings did a great deal for the cause." Stephens was, I fancy, at this early time rather a problem to his brother P.R.B.s, for he was, to quote the graphic expression of one of them, "no good as a painter." What was to become of him nobody knew, till the happy chance arrived of getting him a berth as art critic of the *Athenæum*. If I remember right this was effected through Holman Hunt's influence (Hunt was his most intimate friend), but the exact date at which it took place I have forgotten. In that berth he has remained ever since—"sedet, in aeternumque sedebit"—and during thirty years at least, the readers of that erudite periodical have suffered or enjoyed his pertinacious eloquence. Though he is, I believe, the most estimable and well-meaning of men in private life, in his public critical capacity I bear him a grudge. Not for his opinions, for I don't think, outside a reverence for everything which reminds him of the P.R.B., that he has any, but for his most detestable English. He has invented a series of phrases to apply to pictures, painters, and art subjects in general, which are absolutely excruciating in their combination of uselessness, affectation, and incomprehensibility. Sarcasm, abuse, ridicule, remonstrance, and entreaty have been directed against him in vain—nothing and nobody—not even his editor—will, or can induce him to write words which are "understood of the people." If in the dimmest vista of the future he can see the gleam of a lengthy epithet peculiarly inappropriate to his sentence, he will "go for it," as quickly as Artemus Ward for the historical "*taller* candle." The longer, the more foreign, and the more incomprehensible that word is, the better he will be pleased. He revels verbally in "yellow carnations," luxuriates in the "morbidezza of the chiaroscuro," takes a refreshing dip in iridescent luminosity, and completes his sempiternal polysyllabic meanderings with every pedagogic synonym he can find in the dictionary. Is it not permissible to "gently hate and mildly abominate" such a persistent "*deranger* of epitaphs"?

Seriously speaking, Mr. Stephens is to-day a painstaking though a naturally dull and limited critic, who deserves the respect due to a man who does his work to the best of his ability, and who would do it much more worthily if he were not a little soured, a little anxious to find fault with all art which does not remind him of the days when he too lived, or wished to live, in Arcadia. He is not naturally a man of a critical habit of mind. On the other hand, his industry is untiring, his experience considerable, and his technical criticism,

when unwarped by personal prejudice and stripped of its mysterious embellishments, frequently sound and reflective.

Of Mr. Woolner's art and poetry I need not speak. The world has set its seal of approval upon the latter, and that greater world in art, the Royal Academy, has in one of its many freakish moments crowned the former. Only in relation to the pre-Raphaelites are we tempted to ask, "*Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère ?*"

He says now the whole thing "was a joke," but this is to confuse the movement and the Brotherhood. A joke of so poor a nature does not last for forty years, and, indeed, if one thing about the movement is more evident and interesting than another, it is the delicious seriousness with which the P.R.B.s regarded themselves, and, still more surprisingly, were regarded by the public, the painters, and the critics. Rossetti, it is true, laughed in, and sometimes out of, his sleeve—witness those moments in which poor Collinson was "told" what he was to do, and taken for long moonlight walks when he only longed for rest, and Holman Hunt's reminiscences suggest here and there a subdued chuckle; but did any one ever suspect William Michael Rossetti of making jokes, or Stephens, or Collinson, or W. B. Scott, or Coventry Patmore, or the brothers Tupper? Nor is a sense of humour the strongest characteristic of Millais and Ruskin. No, I think we must receive Mr. Woolner's opinion on this point with considerable hesitation; his sympathies with the movement have almost entirely disappeared; his intimacy with the leaders was cut short by an early departure from England (to Australia); and his subsequent election to the Royal Academy for work from which all signs of pre-Raphaelite influence had disappeared, no doubt all helped to make him regard his youthful enthusiasm with doubt and disapproval. Perhaps he had never really been a pre-Raphaelite in intention, for we have heard that it was Rossetti claimed him as one on account of the principles upon which he had written (according to D. G. R.) "*My Beautiful Lady*." More unlikely things have happened than that the poem in question was written upon no "principles" at all, and that Rossetti, anxious as he then was to find converts, thought, as he admired the poem, that his admiration must spring from its pre-Raphaelitism.

The remaining member of the Brotherhood, W. M. Rossetti, is unconnected with the artistic side of the movement, except as a critic of painting. His work in this respect does not, it seems to me, call for very special remark, and with his other literary productions I am not here concerned. But no one can read his account of the artistic life of his celebrated brother without feeling for the writer the respect due to a painstaking honest man, apparently wholly desirous of telling the simple truth, and yet evincing in every line

loyal unselfish devotion, and intense sympathy and admiration. This is one of the men, I must believe, who has never had justice done him by the English public. He possesses the two greatest merits of a biographer—sympathy and justice. So far as he can ascertain the truth he tells it simply and fully, and with as total an absence of conceit, as of undue humility. The book is, one may perhaps be justified in saying, dull as a literary performance. The author is not, and would not be if he could, a smart journalistic writer, but I should hesitate to say I know any record undertaken by a relation of a great man's doings in art and literature, which was more complete, more trustworthy, or more dignified, or which shows a more earnest study of its subject-matter. As there are advantages, so also there are drawbacks, in relationship to a genius, and W. M. Rossetti's reputation would, I think, have been far higher than it is had he not so loyally devoted a great part of his life to the consideration, the encouragement, the explanation, and, to some extent, the completion of his brother's work.

This finishes the list of the original members of the P.R.B., and the facts given lead us clearly to some rather startling conclusions, which I shall endeavour to sum up shortly in my concluding chapter, before which, however, some mention must be made of those painters and writers who are now commonly spoken of as pre-Raphaelites, from their association in later years with Rossetti or Hunt, or from some supposed likeness in their pictures and writings to the work of the P.R.B.s. A few words must also be said as to the influence of the so-called "school" upon contemporary art, though it is, I hope, abundantly evident to all who have read the foregoing with any care, that there never was anything in the nature of a P.R.B. *school* properly so called. Two or three men working in a somewhat similar direction, but with different aims and different methods, holding at no time more than one principle in common, and quickly abandoning even that single agreement, do not constitute a "school" in any intelligible sense of that word's meaning; and such was the case here. Nothing dies so hard as a word, particularly a word which nobody understands, and there is little doubt but that the one in question will survive all of us; but a day will surely come when it will be seen that the essence of what is now known as pre-Raphaelitism was not the influence of a school or a principle, but simply the influence of one man, and that man, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The early Italian Painters, the elaboration of detail, the painting of each part of a landscape background to a picture on the spot instead of from studies, simplicity, absence of convention and pictorial artifice, and all the rest of the supposed aims and principles, were the merest fringe of the movement, the accidents whereby what Dobell would call "the imperceptible *substans*" revealed itself;

the motive of the work, the real point of view, was neither simple, nor entirely derived from the Italian mediævalists, but was complicated, personal, and essentially Gothic, imbued with the sadness of the northern races, and the questioning, the unrest, the literary spirit of the nineteenth century. Ruskin talks about a few casts from the work of Ghiberti having inspired the leaders—and no doubt all three did admire Ghiberti's work, but what does that prove? There is no work in the whole history of art which is so essentially and (*splendidly*, mind!) conventional as Ghiberti's, as any one who has studied "The Ghiberti Gates" must surely know. Not only did he adopt all the conventions he could find, but invented new ones for himself, which have remained and been adopted by all succeeding artists in such bronze work; and he remains to this day as an unique example of a master who, in despite of all true art theory, endeavoured, and succeeded by sheer genius and ingenuity of convention, in making the art of sculpture do duty for the art of painting. No more elaborate system of chiaroscuro was ever adopted by an artist, no greater elaboration of composition ever shown, than in this old sculptor's work, and many of his groups and figures might be reproduced without the alteration of a line, as specimens of the utmost that arrangement, balance, symmetry, and repetition can produce in pictorial beauty.

Very easy is it to understand how the almost marvellous beauty, elaboration, and inventiveness of Ghiberti's work could inspire the enthusiasm of young artists—how could it do otherwise?—but to trace the inspiration of the movement, as Ruskin does, or rather did, to this sculptor's simplicity, faith, and unconventional spirit, is opposed to all common sense, and all the facts. If, moreover, we may trust Holman Hunt's own words, Raphael himself, the greatest master of convention that the world has known, was the master most warmly admired of all by these young men. Hunt calls him "the prince of painters," and says that the choice of name for the Brotherhood was determined, not so much in adhesion to the painters who went before Raphael, as in contempt for those English artists who were considered to paint in his manner. In a word, not admiration for the past, but revolt against the present painting was the inspiring thought, and the conviction is reluctantly forced upon me that Ruskin from the first misunderstood the movement, and therefore, of course unconsciously, misled the public. That the great writer's view was to some extent endorsed with the acquiescence of silence by the P.R. artists, I do not for a moment deny: it would have been strange had the young painters not taken the opportunity of conciliating so powerful an ally. And it must not be forgotten that for Rossetti especially, Ruskin was not only an ally but a constant and generous patron for at least ten years.

Remember in support of the above view how the intercourse between critic and painter commences. On the 14th April 1854 Rossetti writes to Madox Brown: ". . . M'Cracken of course sent my drawing to Ruskin, who the other day wrote me an incredible letter about it, remaining mine respectfully (!!), and wanting to call. I of course stroked him down in my answer, and yesterday he came. . . . He seems in a mood to make my fortune."

That Ruskin did do a great deal is evident from W. M. Rossetti's account of the relations between him and Dante Gabriel, which he says he cannot precisely define, but believes that there was "a general understanding that within a certain annual maximum Ruskin would buy if he liked it whatever Rossetti had to offer him at a scale of prices such as other purchasers would pay; and under this arrangement funds would be forthcoming at times to meet the artist's convenience without rigid assessment as to value previously delivered."

Obviously, therefore, there was no likelihood of Rossetti protesting publicly against his patron's views; in private, I fancy, he often did so: at all events the relations between the critic and painter were frequently strained, and about 1865 came to a somewhat abrupt termination. It may be noticed that nearly all Rossetti's designs from the *Morte d'Arthur*, and the majority of his Scriptural subjects, belong to this period of his friendship with Ruskin, and that thenceforward—1863 to 1882—there is, broadly speaking, an entire change both in the class of design, and the artist's treatment thereof.

Directly we get outside the mystic circle of the seven P.R.B.s, there is considerable difficulty in knowing whose work should and should not be included as falling under the influence of pre-Raphaelitism. For, as I have shown, the above term covered even in the Brotherhood aims extremely divergent, and no common ratio was to be found, save in a few rare instances, between the pictures of even the three leaders. For the purpose of these notes, however, it will, I think, be convenient to group the sympathisers and followers of Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais in three chief divisions. The first division will include those contemporary artists who were associated with, though not actually members of, the confederacy; the second, whom we will call the New Pre-Raphaelites, will comprise Mr. Burne-Jones, Mr. William Morris, Mr. Pater, and their respective followers and imitators; the third will show the artists who were only partially or temporarily led astray (or put in the right path) by the pre-Raphaelite idea.

These notes, over-long, I fear, already for my readers' patience, draw towards a close, for both space and time are wanting to enable

me to say more than a few words upon each of these classes ; but it must not be forgotten that this portion of the History of Pre-Raphaelitism is that which is really of the first importance. The "snowball" set rolling in 1848 is rolling still, and in the forty years since then has greatly increased in volume. What the three painters did, and what Ruskin mistakenly but finely described them as doing, have united together in one wave of influence, and with the help of the literature and poetry of Swinburne, Pater, Theodore Watts, and Symonds, the stained glass, furniture, tapestry, pottery, and wall-hangings of Morris, Falkner, De Morgan, Walter Crane, and others—have given the colour and shape to this most unique fine art movement of the century.

To trace how this has taken place ; the part which literature and painting have played therein ; the sharp attack, repulse, and final defeat of the conventional newspaper criticism ; the conversion, sullen and slow, of the Royal Academy ; the alteration effected in art education and domestic environment ; and the gradual welding together in our latest painting of this so-called pre-Raphaelite theory, and the technique of the Foreign, and especially the French Schools—this was the task which the present writer once proposed to himself ; the task which he hopes will some day be accomplished by a stronger and younger hand.

Walter Deverell and Charles Collins (brother of Wilkie) were two painters intimately connected with the P.R.B. Deverell, in fact, as I said above, became a P.R.B. in place of Collinson (retired). Testimony unites in declaring the first of these to have been a man of singular gentleness and sweetness of disposition, and an artist of genuine if delicate accomplishment. He died in 1854, and there is a little allusion to him in one of D. G. R.'s letters, telling how, after his death, "I have been doing one or two things to poor Deverell's picture (from *As You Like It*), the chief of which has been to attempt getting rid of what I thought unpleasant in Celia's face." The "Brotherhood" here is real enough, is it not ? The truth is, these men were always doing kind things of this sort for one another, as witness the following account given me in a letter by Hunt the other day in response to a question about an early chalk drawing by him of Millais which I had recently bought, and which I have reproduced here :—¹

"The sketch which you refer to was undoubtedly done by me—executed in April 1851, on a day which R., M., and I devoted in a spirit of self-sacrifice to a former companion, who, tired of his struggle as an artist to gain a footing in England, had gone

¹ *i.e.* in the quarto edition only.

to the gold diggings¹ in Australia. At the date given, after failure on Tom Tiddler's Ground, he had got to Melbourne, and set to work again as an artist in taking likenesses; and as we were told he had difficulty in impressing well-to-do visitors, who saw our names in English papers, we met at Millais' to make a set of one another's portraits for the studio in Australia. I did on the same morning the drawing of Rossetti in pastile; but he was so impatient for his own chances that he curtailed my time on the first task, and the second was threatened altogether, until I determined to begin as he drew me; so there was but bare time for me to bring either of mine to a termination. Millais did a pencil drawing of W. M. Rossetti, and of one of the drones of our party, who of course did nothing in return.

"D. G. R., as a portraitist at the time, was given to unlimited idealism if the position lent itself to his treatment; but when this, or the person, would not fit his pattern, he went all astray unless he could correct to his heart's content. The portrait of me was decided to be an example of the last order of refractoriness, inasmuch as in the end, instead of representing a man of twenty-four, it was decided to be like one of forty or more, and his brother said that the being could be no other than Rush, the great murderer of the period.

"Still — could not have drawn it either then or at any other time, for it was a sterling artistic performance. It was sent out with the rest to Melbourne, and the set royally served the purpose of giving a professional *caché* (*catchet*) to the antipodean struggle inasmuch as it helped a long career of fortune worship, until about three years since, he was able to turn an honest penny by breaking up the collection and sending them into the market."

To return to Deverell. Woolner writes me he "painted closely from Nature, and was associated with the others; but whether he painted in this way from his own initial energy or was induced to do so by Hunt's example I cannot now remember, if indeed I ever heard. He had a sense of simplicity and grace so exquisite that his early death was a great loss to our school." Madox Brown ranks him above Collinson as more worthy of remembrance. He was the son of a schoolmaster. Charles Collins is scarcely remembered now as an artist, though he had every opportunity of early training, being the son of William Collins, R.A., one of the finest English

¹ Hunt gives no name, but this may possibly refer to Woolner, who did go to "the diggings," and, failing to make his fortune there, returned to Melbourne, made medallions (of the successful diggers, I suppose), and finally returned to England.

landscapists of his day, and whose pictures still remain the best records we possess of the sunnier aspect of peasant life in England in the early years of the present century. Wilkie Collins, as may be even yet remembered, was a very short man with a large head,¹ but his brother Charles was tall, finely proportioned, and one of the handsomest young fellows of his day. And by this accident he has become immortal, for Millais, seeking as usual for splendid models, caught him and made him into a "Huguenot" and a "Black Brunswicker," and other heroic individuals who combined dandyism and devotion in equal proportions. As a matter of taste, the well-brushed and greased hair and the brilliant polish of the Blucher boots in the last-mentioned character of Mr. Collins have always grated somewhat upon the present writer. No doubt they are *pre-Raphaelite* enough, for the dandies of the year 1850 still used bear's grease *ad libitum*, but in Millais' unsparingly realistic reproduction of them the sentiment of the picture appears to suffer.

A very splendid-looking man, at all events, Collins must have been; but, like the other minor P.R.B.s, he couldn't paint, and subsequently he took to literature, and wrote rather a fascinating book of travel entitled *A Cruise upon Wheels*. He married a daughter of Charles Dickens, was indeed engaged to her at the period of the "Black Brunswicker" picture, for which she also posed. It was the painting of her white satin dress which really made Millais' reputation amongst the dealers: no more wonderful piece of purely imitative technique is to be seen to this day in English painting—not even Mr. Tadmā's too-celebrated marbles. Collins died young.

Arthur Hughes is still alive, and still painting, it seems to me, with very much the same spirit as that of his early days. With Madox Brown, I wonder why his work is not more widely appreciated, and why his name is so seldom mentioned nowadays. Ruskin indeed spoke generously of him on several occasions, and his pictures are remarkable for much purity and delicacy of feeling, and are from their own point of view carefully and well painted. I remember seeing no picture from his hand which did not evidence refinement, industry, and labour. I think in the following description of him by Brown, sufficient stress is not laid upon a certain rather wilful strangeness, bordering upon affectation, which the composition, subject-matter, and colour schemes of his pictures are apt to suggest. Assuredly his art is one which appeals less in an exhibition than in a home, and grows upon our favour with increased acquaintance. Hughes must be a middle-aged man by this time, and a disappointed one so far as public recognition is concerned.

¹ His portrait is prefixed to the essay on his writings given here.

Here is what Brown told me of him six years ago :—

“I have not seen Arthur Hughes for a very long time. He was very ill-used because everybody ran him down ; and there were designs of his full of beauty and poetry—King Arthur designs, and things of that sort. A knight riding across a bridge in the time of King Arthur ; up above in the sky are three angels flying above his head. ‘The Shepherds and the Mahois.’ Three ladies playing the violin—the Misses Lushington, it is said. In the Academy a few years ago I saw ‘The Return,’ an orchard in apple blossom, some children in a garden, and a father and son coming in in their working costume, as though they had been working in the fields all day. It is not above five years ago. It was hung in the best part of the Academy, but no one took any notice of it. But it was undoubtedly one of the best in the Academy. It was very strange, but it seemed to be Hughes’s fate. He undoubtedly produced pictures which were most poetical. I saw a very pretty picture of his last year at Liverpool ; it was called ‘Rest by the Way.’ It was marked only thirty guineas. Not a single person knew that Arthur Hughes was there. Yet a few years ago Ruskin would have been writing about it, and everybody would have been talking about it. He is so very gentle and philosophic, being gentlemanly, and won’t push himself forward. I have not seen Arthur Hughes for a very long time.”

There was one strange artist allied in sympathy with the pre-Raphaelites, who is still alive, I believe, though where he is living, or how, nobody seems to clearly know ; and I hear that he is supposed to have given up painting some years since. This was Windus, the painter of “Burd Helen,” a fine picture which, “though hung nearly out of sight” in the Academy Exhibition of 1856, was classed by Ruskin as only second to the “Autumn Leaves” of Millais (in the same year), and a painting which would hold its own “with the most noble pictures of all time.” All time is a “tall” expression, but, so far as time has gone since then, Ruskin’s words have not been unjustified. The exact price paid for it by Mr. Miller of Liverpool, its original purchaser, is unknown to me, probably between eighty and a hundred guineas at an outside estimate. The work came to the hammer two years later when this gentleman’s collection was sold at Christie’s, and then fetched two hundred guineas ; time passed, Windus disappeared from public view, the public—the picture-buying public I mean—and the dealers forgot his very name, and three months since “Burd Helen” appeared once more in the salerooms. I congratulated myself—for in the meantime I had seen and fallen in love with the picture in a loan



Imp. Dumas et Lenoir, Paris

Kindly watched by my bed, left no voice in prayer;
 Wrote not any words on me, when the hour is nigh —
 Let a stream of melody not flow from some sweet organ —
 And melody will I lay my head, and fold my hands to die.

Sick am I of idle words, past all receding —
 Women, that weep and whisper, and kinder and on cool —
 With the sounds that come to me, for all their sweet reprieve,
 The language one would fathom not, but only hear and feel —

Let them tell me more to me, and ripple in my hearing,
 Like waves upon some lonely beach where no light on the water;
 What I may sleep my soul therein, and a craving thought, not form;
 Drift on thought slender to a dream, and through a dream to death.

DEATH THE FRIEND

GEORGE DU MAURIER

From the original pen drawing in the possession of the author

collection at Manchester, and here was a chance: I determined to have it at any price, expected even to have little opposition. Not a bit of it, the bidding mounted up quickly, and at about five hundred guineas I gave up the contest in disgust. It was under all the circumstances a remarkable instance of a small picture by an unfashionable, and almost unknown living artist, being sold upon its merits for a very high price: the picture was by no means a popularly-conceived one, and the drawing of the horse, especially, was, what an old artist of my acquaintance used to call "rummy-funny." The picture fetched the price purely because the comment of Ruskin upon it *was true*, and with that comment the text was understood. Here is the quotation:

"The work is thoughtful and intense in the highest degree. The pressure of the girl's hand on her side; her wild, firm, desolate look at the stream—she not raising her eyes as she makes her appeal, for fear of the greater mercilessness in the human look than in the glaze of the gliding water—the just choice of the type of the rider's cruel face, and of the scene itself, so terrible in haggardness of rattling stones and ragged heath, are all marks of the action of the very grandest imaginative power—shortened only of hold upon our feelings because dealing with a subject too fearful to be for a moment believed true."¹ It is memorable that Rossetti himself painted an oil-picture with this title, though he spelt it in the older form of "Burd Alane," but this was not (according to W. M. Rossetti) till 1861.

Another most able artist, more technically perfect indeed than Windus, and more intimately connected with the pre-Raphaelites, was Mr. Fred. Sandys, the painter of "Medea" and other pictures, and even better known for his chalk portraits. In this latter phase of art, Mr. Sandys has in the England of to-day no superior, and few rivals: he is at once perfect in his handling of the material and in the understanding of its capacities and limitations. His work is fine as portraiture, and almost equally so as pictorial art. At least this is so with all his spontaneous, sympathetic examples. Occasionally for a rich patron, or from weariness or haste, these finer qualities of sympathy and insight seem to disappear, and the result is only a piece of marvellous handicraft; but at his best these chalk portraits rival those of Mr. Watts himself in dignity and expression, and far surpass that great artist in fidelity to their models. The quarrel and the intimacy of Sandys and Rossetti are subjects which I shall only allude to briefly for the sake of removing a very mistaken notion which somehow has obtained popular acceptance. This is that Mr. Sandys and Rossetti quarrelled because of a caricature of the pre-Raphaelites published by the former.

¹ *Academy Notes*, 1856. John Ruskin.

The picture burlesqued was the "Sir Isumbras at the Ford" of Millais, a composition which, despite many beauties, lent itself easily to caricature—and the treatment by Sandys was most ingenious. The drawing was engraved and published, and did, I believe, give great offence to some of the weaker P.R.B., but Rossetti simply laughed at it, and his friendship for the author continued altogether unabated. At this time Sandys was living with Rossetti at Cheyne Walk, where there were also for some months at least Swinburne and George Meredith. A nice quiet quartette they must have been in those days, particularly when Joseph Knight and William Morris, James Hannay (sailor and novelist) and Edward Burne-Jones dropped in for the evening!

The real reason for the quarrel was that Rossetti chose to imagine Sandys had taken one of his subjects. I am assured by Madox Brown, who remembers the circumstances perfectly, that Sandys was entirely in the right, that the subject, which was one of "Beatrice in Heaven," was his own, and that Rossetti's claim to it was "nonsense." However this may have been, Rossetti delivered himself of a long discourse to Sandys on the obligations of friendship, to the effect that "everything he (Rossetti) had in the world was at the disposal of his friends save only his subjects! *They* were sacred: let no man touch them"; and much more rhodomontade of the same kind. To this Sandys wrote a hasty reply, and Rossetti a hastier answer, and—the friendship came to an end.

Another painter who is usually spoken of as a pre-Raphaelite, though he was never in any way connected with the Brotherhood, is Edward Burne-Jones, now an Associate of the Royal Academy, with regard to whose art I have spoken at length in the other parts of this book.

His acquaintance with Rossetti, begun in London, ripened into intimacy at Oxford, when Rossetti and Morris went up there to paint the Union frescoes. This came about through a Mr. Woodward, the architect of the Union. He came to ask Rossetti what he should do with the open spaces on the Union walls, and Rossetti in reply made the proposal that Morris and himself should paint them. This was on the condition that all materials were to be found and the painters were to live in Oxford at free quarters till the work was finished. In fact, very much Ruskin's ideal wage for an artist was to be supplied—"implements, bread and cheese, and occasionally a plate of figs to keep him in good humour."

A good deal has been said about the nobility and unselfishness of this proposal, but the truth seems to be that the matter was chiefly regarded by Rossetti as a good opportunity for trying his hand at fresco—perhaps also for showing what he could do—and after the first enthusiasm had faded, the projected decoration dragged

on for some years, and was finally abandoned. A good many of young artists and Oxford men were associated in this scheme, amongst others—Morris, Val Prinsep (now R.A.), Arthur Hughes, Pollen, Burne-Jones, Spencer Stanhope, and A. Munro. The story of the painters' haste, the want of preparation of the walls, and the consequent fading of the frescoes, has all been frequently told, but the following brief characterisation by Madox Brown of the construction put by the young enthusiasts on the "implements, and bread and cheese," which were to be provided them, is new and not unamusing. (Rossetti, I may mention, began two frescoes, of which he nearly completed one, the other was scarcely more than commenced.)

"They ran up a tremendous bill for paint-brushes, scrapers, scaffolding, etc., and used to waste the materials frightfully. Rossetti used to throw the scrapers all over the place, and had jars of the most expensive paint, into which they used to let the scrapings and dust get, and, of course, the paint was spoilt. They also ran up an enormous bill for plum-puddings and turkeys, which they used to dine off every evening, and then finish up with whist."

William Michael Rossetti's dry comment on this scheme I take from the memoir of his brother. It is probably written without intentional sarcasm.

After naming the artists mentioned above, W. M. Rossetti says—

"These, along with Alexander Munro for sculptural work, were all. Not any one of them was conversant with the processes of solid and permanent wall-painting. The works were executed, I understand, in a sort of water-colour distemper, and were from the beginning predestined by Fate and Climate to ruin. My brother allotted to himself two large spaces on the walls; painted one subject more or less completely, and began or schemed at the other. . . . The scheme was in active operation in 1857, stagnated in 1858, and was partially revived and soon afterwards finally dropped in 1859."

There is practically nothing now left of these frescoes, and the affair is only important from the intimacy produced and encouraged thereby between Rossetti and the Oxford group. In this respect its importance is very great; for the literary side of pre-Raphaelitism, and the relation thereto of decorative art, were due to this intimacy of Messrs. Burne-Jones, Falkner, Swinburne, Pater, and Rossetti; and had it not been for these literary and decorative channels, and for the culture stamp which they impressed upon the movement, there is much reason to doubt whether Rossetti's influence in art would not have gradually faded.

With Burne-Jones, however, to carry on and develop the romantic and mystical character of his painting ; with Morris and Falkner to give a practical application of his principles to decorative art ; with Swinburne and Pater to do sympathetic work in poetry and criticism ; and with Ruskin to defend the movement with his eloquence, and sustain it with his popularity and his money ; it is not difficult to see how far and in how many directions the new pre-Raphaelites extended their influence.

The *new pre-Raphaelites*—that is the point of the matter, for from the time of these Oxford frescoes—possibly before, but certainly from then—the old idea—the idea that, I have tried to show, was always more honoured in the breach than the observance—passed away entirely.

Having begun as a method of work, pre-Raphaelitism now became a method of feeling, a question of sentiment. The word soon grew into use as almost a synonym for mediævalism, and is so frequently used to-day. But it was mediævalism with a difference ; with the modern spirit added to the ancient form, and with a bias overwhelming and unfortunate towards a view of life which was neither wholesome nor manly. I have tried for many years to explain the effect of the spirit of this later pre-Raphaelitism, especially as shown in the work of its chief master, Edward Burne-Jones, and I shall only repeat here that, in my opinion, this very beautiful art is not of a kind which will do the world much good, or upon which any true school can be founded.

A very rich and vivid imagination, joined to unremitting industry and an exquisite sense of colour, have resulted in producing Burne-Jones's painting, have united to render his pictures uniquely attractive. I acknowledge their beauty : I almost reverence their achievement. But none the less do I see clearly how fatal is their influence, how perverted their meaning, how vain their accomplishment. I see how little suited is this spirit of sick-sad dreams to the country I love, and the folks who have made England in the old time, and who are making it to-day. And as I look back over the great art of former times, I seek in vain for any painting or sculpture which has based its appeal, or found its beauty in a panegyric of the vanished years, in an endeavour to forget the circumstance, the obligations, and the meaning of the artist's own generation.

And more than this, I regret to say that I am forced to believe that these pictures are, irrespective of their mediævalism and their archaisms of form and subject, unwholesome in themselves. They appear to me based upon a view of the passion and the power of love which is untrue and undesirable. The pictures are morbid, and not less so

because the personages shown therein are apt to be epicure—though perhaps we may not rightly term the work *sensual*, it is so uniformly and intensely *sensuous*, that perhaps the baser intention had been less harmful in result.

After all, if we limit a teacher in books, ought we not also to limit teaching by inference and suggestion? and if we do not actually limit such we ought at least to recognise that such teaching is no less real, and perhaps even more effective.

I remember when Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* came out the outcry that was made, but *Poems and Ballads* was only the poetical expression of pre-Raphaelitism as exemplified in Burne-Jones's pictures—to whom indeed the book was dedicated. The same criterion would approve or condemn both. Should the painter be blamed for the aspect of his work, for its meaning, for the mystery of the flesh and love of which his pictures hint? Ah, that opens a wide question, the question of an artist's duty to himself and his art and to the public at large. I remember Swinburne saying, in a brilliant preface to his edition of some Coleridge lyrics, that "in the main we got out of every man (every artist) what he had in him to give"; and that "I am that I am is the best answer to any impertinence of praise or blame," and so perhaps for the artist himself the point of view must be conceded, but we may at least make our own deductions from admiration or gratitude, if the painter's exquisite doing is such as to enfeeble our manhood, or relax our energies. And this is the more necessary as the perfection of his art increases, and the younger men begin to form themselves upon his manner and re-echo his spirit.

Is it not strange, this outcome of the P.R.B. theories of simplicity, earnestness, and fidelity to nature? This queer half-ascetic, half-voluptuous art; occupied with Virgins Holy and otherwise, angels, mermaidens, mediæval knights, emblems of night and morning, seedtime and harvest, virtue and vice. Yet throughout every manifestation of its quaint sexless beauty this art of Burne-Jones has throughout splendour and delicacy. If we leave on one side the subject of the work and its inner motive—or motivelessness; if we will condone the absence of all natural visual fact, and content ourselves with a mosaic of beautiful lines and tints; if we will let his figures stand, as well they may, for fair-seeming shows to whom humanity has no kinship—we may then gain from this artist the most subtle, the most exquisite pleasure. Only, do not let us deceive ourselves: don't let us attempt to call this a pure art or an ennobling one. It is neither: its scent hangs heavy on the moral air as the scent of tuberose in a heated room; the involution of its fancies is morbid and artificial as the twisted robes and strained attitudes of

the characters in the pictures. Above all, the outward mediævalism of form is a sham; as is the semi-asceticism, and above all the religion. A sham, I mean, in themselves; not because of the painter's wilful pretence, but because his imagination, delicate, prodigal, and refined, is nevertheless distorted and unnatural. Once, in all jesting friendliness, Rossetti made a rhyme about this artist, which, as was his wont, went to the root of the subject. It was written, we must remember, many years ago, when both rhymester and rhymed upon were young—

“There is a young painter called Jones,
A cheer here, and hisses, and groans;
The state of his mind
Is a shame to mankind,
But a matter of triumph to Jones.”¹

A “matter of triumph,” that is the gist of the question: for Jones does not feel, does not believe that any imperfection, any morbid bias exists in his painting. I remember his telling me some years ago that art was to him an enchanted world, to which Rossetti had given him the key, and in which he had lived ever since. And this is, I think, only a slightly exaggerated expression of his point of view. He does rather pride himself on living apart, in this enchanted country, and on refusing to consider himself as belonging to England and the nineteenth century. A pity in some ways that he was not born in Germany, and did not have three years “with the colours” as a boy. Of his followers, I must here give little more than the names. There is Spencer Stanhope, who of late years has lived at Florence, and who in the earlier years of the Grosvenor Gallery, was a faithful, if (as Ruskin once unkindly said) a futile echo of his master. There is Eveleen Pickering, now Evelyn de Morgan, whose work is almost equally founded on that of Burne-Jones and Stanhope. There is Mr. Henry Holiday, who, unless I am mistaken, used to work as an assistant to Burne-Jones, and who has since made some reputation as a decorative artist. There is “Tommy” Rooke, as his friends all call him, and as even strangers are tempted to think of him; surely the most faithful and admiring of followers, the most patient and delicate of assistants. There is Fairfax Murray, who knows silently more about the inner life and details of the P.R.B. and their adherents than any one living, and who keeps his information to himself, and whose own painting is a peculiar mixture of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. There is Mr. Strudwick, a most delicate workman, and full of quaint decorative fancies. There is Walter Crane, plainly owing his inspiration to the same source, and turning it to pleasanter, and more inventive, and more practical uses for delighting children and making our houses fanciful and pretty. All of these have fallen under the

¹ This rhyme (and others to a similar effect) has been so widely repeated during the past twenty years, that I feel justified in inserting it here.

spell of this later pre-Raphaelitism, as have numberless amateurs, and many less well-known artists. At one time—almost twenty years since—the disease was so catching, so prevalent, that it was happily dubbed the pre-Raphaelite measles, and no student was supposed to be safe until he had taken, and—perhaps—till he had got rid of them. Who did not take them, from the President of the Royal Academy down to Sidney Colvin, who indeed took them very severely—witness the *Portfolio* about 1870! Of course there were different kinds, suited to various constitutions. James Linton (not yet Sir James) had them *à la* Rossetti, and used to produce wonderful long-legged pages and high-bosomed maidens, with legs five or six feet long, slender waists, and gigantic flaxen plaits of hair. Brett (R.A. now) had them *à la* Holman Hunt, and won Ruskin's earnest praise for painting every blade of grass in the Herne Hill fields, through which the Professor took his daily walk. Poynter "had them badly": witness his illustrations to the Dalziel Bible (and first-rate they are too!); and all sorts of people one would never expect fell victims; as, for instance, George Pinwell, and for a short time Fred Walker and Houghton and Val Bromley, and of course Prinsep, whose contribution *à la* Rossetti hangs to-day on the walls of the Arts Club, and is far away the best picture I have ever seen from his hand. Queerest of all people to take them were George du Maurier and Linley Sambourne: the latter has them to this day. Du Maurier at the time was indeed profoundly influenced, and the fine drawings to Thackeray's *Esmond*, for instance, show Rossetti in every line—not as imitations, but with that resemblance in difference which is the way a great artist rightly influences a younger one. Look, for instance of this, at the drawing I reproduce here, entitled "Death the Friend." We might almost fancy the lady was Rossetti's favourite model, and the whole spirit of the composition is his own.

And amongst the younger artists of the present time this P.R.B. influence is still strongly marked. The work of Henry Ryland, C. H. Shannon, C. S. Ricketts, especially, clearly derives its inspiration from Rossetti and Jones, and all the clique who draw for that extraordinary periodical *The Century Guild Hobby-Horse* are lineal descendants of the P.R.B. Examples of some of these painters will be found in the later pages of this book, but space fails me to mention their work in detail. These brief notes on a subject of great artistic interest, and as it seems to me importance, must end here, as my final chapters are entirely devoted to the consideration of the special characteristics of Rossetti's and Holman Hunt's painting.

IX.—THE PAINTING AND THE POETRY OF DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI.¹



HERE are some men of whom it is the sad fortune that throughout their lives the praise and blame that they experience are given in an equally exaggerated degree; they are never free from the dust and confusion of the fierce battle which partizans raise around their work and their character. As to many such, the temper of their friends, the spirit of the age in which they live, the circumstances amongst which their lot is cast, are responsible for the separateness of their lives, for the dust of praise or blame which surrounds their achievements and their failures. But for others—and these perhaps are the nobler spirits—friendship, circumstance, and surroundings, are less responsible than some strange peculiarities of temper and intellect, sufficiently powerful to unite with themselves a portion of the practices and theories of everyday life, and to reject without hesitation all that is incompatible. Such as these last are of the old prophetic temper; of this race have sprung those who in every generation have raised their voices in denunciation or warning of the creeds amongst which they lived. They may have no gospel to deliver; their voices may carry no message that the world can profit by. Clear messages, as George Eliot tells us, are rare in this world of to-day, but if their discontent is sufficiently genuine to affect their lives, if their personality is sufficiently strong to affect the lives of others, and if their genius is sufficiently great to proclaim itself as a thing apart, having a special and inimitable character of its own,—then, whatever may be the perversities and fantasies of such men, they are sure to become

¹ Written only a few months after Rossetti's death; published in the *Contemporary Review*. I have inserted this article mainly because I discovered with much pleasure, and even more surprise, that Mr. Theodore Watts (the most intimate friend Rossetti ever had) was disposed to consider the paper as in some respects adequate. Mr. Watts's own words on this subject are so infinitely beyond anything I could ever write that I must refer all readers interested in Rossetti to his article, entitled "The Truth about Rossetti," in the *Contemporary Review*, 1883.



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leaders of those who share their peculiarities without possessing their power. And the resistance of the world at large to the eccentricities of any such cult has the inevitable effect of intensifying the zeal with which its eccentricities are manifested—of causing the statement of the creed to be made in cruder and cruder terms. It sometimes happens that the leader of the school, wearied by the desertion or disgusted by the shallowness of his followers, breaks with them and his old theories, and becomes like other men; but more frequently he is bound by the acts of his *clientèle*, and what was at first a mere youthful enthusiasm, and a passionate revolt against convention, becomes the very habit of his soul.

It is too soon after Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti's death, whilst so many of his associates and relations are still alive, to discuss the question how far the peculiarities of his painting and poetry were due to inherent personal characteristics, and how far to the surroundings and circumstances of his life; but it is almost equally difficult to deal with the question of his art without making some mention of those circumstances, for, perhaps, in no painter of modern times was the personal and the artistic life so strangely intermingled. Those, for instance, who criticise so severely the strangeness and the mournful tendency of Rossetti's pictures when taken as a whole, and who do not scruple to attribute to the painter deliberate affectation and assumed grief for the mere sake of eccentricity or effect, would do well to take into account the circumstances of his Italian descent, his father's exile from his native land, and his own great sorrow in losing, in the first years of his wedded life, the wife to whom he was so passionately attached. An alien in race and an alien in spirit, suffering from keen private grief, and met without by an opposition to his art, which made up in personal invective what it lacked in reasonable judgment, it is perhaps little wonderful that young Rossetti, conscious as he must have been of great and original powers, isolated himself from the general public, and found a bitter consolation in giving up to dreams of the past, those powers which had no longer any object in the future.

Every one knows by this time that well-worn story of the pre-Raphaelite Brethren, of the fury with which they were both attacked and defended, and I do not intend to dwell upon these things here; but I must note that practically Rossetti was the chief artistic and imaginative leader of the movement. Mr. Holman Hunt was a man of supreme industry, undoubted keenness of observation, and technical skill; but, though an enthusiastic disciple, he had no great *original* pictorial ability.¹ What he has done—and much of it is very

¹ I hope I may be pardoned this repetition of criticism in the early portion of the chapter on the history of pre-Raphaelitism.

beautiful and very noble work—has been done with an infinity of labour, often prolonged over years, upon each single picture. Mr. Millais was, as an artist, gifted with every faculty except that of caring what he painted or drew; he was as impartial as the sunlight that falls upon the just and the unjust. The quickening influence that fell upon both these men, and aroused their intelligence and stirred their feelings, was the passionately emotional genius of Rossetti, and looking back to early Millais pictures, one can see as plainly as if it were written upon the canvas—*Here I was painting what Rossetti felt*:¹ *here his influence had passed away.*

If any of my readers happen to have the early quarto edition of Tennyson's poems with the illustrations, and will take the trouble to compare the drawings therein by Millais, Hunt and Rossetti; and then, with these designs in their mind, go and examine the Rossettis which are now being displayed at the Royal Academy, they will see beyond doubt whose was the guiding influence amongst the so-called pre-Raphaelites, and why traces of mediæval Italy kept cropping out in realistic pictures of English orchards, or illustrations of sacred history. Look, for instance, at the drawing by Mr. Holman Hunt in illustration of the Lady of Shalott. Why, this is a Rossetti in all its main points! Face and figure, and arrangement of drapery and pose, are all due to the influence of the last-mentioned painter. And any number of similar illustrations might be given. If the history of this strange artistic movement—strange alike in its inception, its fierce energy, and its brief, stormy life—ever comes to be told from the inside, as alone it can be adequately written, it will be found that in every sense of the word Rossetti was the head, the brain, of the Society, and that his extraordinary personal influence alone gave any coherence to the practices of the various members. We can all see now, though, perhaps, I may be blamed for saying it in so many words, that neither Sir John Millais nor Mr. Holman Hunt is of the reforming type of character. They were once, when they were square men in round holes; and, to this day, their art is the better for the *sturm und drang* period through which Rossetti hurled it. But the influence is gone,—had faded long before he died to whom it owed its origin; and many an admirer of "The Awakened Conscience" of Mr. Hunt, and the "Mariana" of Sir John Millais, must have found the want, in the same painters' later pictures, of the deep poetical feeling which sprang from the enthusiastic spirit and vivid imagination of their brother pre-Raphaelite.

In speaking, therefore, of Rossetti's art, and trying to estimate its worth, we must always bear in mind that, as a set-off against

¹ I am bound to add that Holman Hunt's influence is also strongly perceptible in some of Millais' early work.

many eccentricities and deficiencies of treatment, and many limitations of thought and feeling, we have this fact—that it was powerful to trouble the artistic Bethesda to the very depths of its sluggish waters, and to set artists upon new tracks of execution and new impulses of thought. Surely no mean praise to a painter, that, under his awakening power, other painters did better and more vital work than they have done before or since; and that the forward impulse in art which he was mainly instrumental in creating, bids fair to widen out into issues of which no one can at present predict the end.

But I am not concerned here to defend Rossetti as the leader of the pre-Raphaelites, nor to ask for fame for him on any secondary ground whatever. I am desirous to point out again what seem to me to be the actual achievements of this master in the two arts in which he laboured; and I am the more anxious to do this (if my readers will pardon me a single word of personal explanation), because I have been accused of late by several persons of a desire to depreciate the work of the pre-Raphaelites, and to attribute thereto demoralising influences which it does not possess. The sentence which so afflicted Ruskin that he left off writing criticisms of contemporary painters—*Damn the fellow, why doesn't he back his friends?*—has been hurled at me directly or indirectly many times, and the attempt seems hopeless to make painters understand that we may admire great qualities without shutting the eyes to weak ones, or that one can honestly enjoy a picture, and yet be forced to consider its artist neither a Titian nor a Michelangelo. The result is that because a writer is not a partizan upon one side, it is straightway concluded that he must be a partizan on the other, and if he ventures to find fault with a single pre-Raphaelite failing, he is told that he is not entitled to admire a single pre-Raphaelite greatness. Of course such reasoning is absurd, but even absurdity becomes worth demolishing when it gains universal acceptance; and in the art-world of London at the present day, we can hardly gain a hearing for any view of the matter which is not, either professedly or actually, a partizan one. Are you for Belt or Verheyden? That is the form of question nowadays in other artistic matters than the great libel case; and the man who in reply murmurs gently "*Arcades ambo*," is looked upon with contempt, or more probably still as a spy in both camps.

In the first place, then, as regards Rossetti's work, I must say at once that I propose to consider it as a whole, not confining one portion of my remarks to the poetry, another to the painting, but treating both manifestations of his intellect together. And this for the simple reason that it does not appear to me to be possible to separate them without doing both the painter and the poet gross

injustice. Of the technical perfection of workmanship in each, a few words may have to be said separately; but for the discussion of the more emotional, imaginative, and purely intellectual qualities, the two divisions of art must here be considered as one. Now, throughout the whole of our subject's painting, and throughout the whole of his poetry, there runs one dominant idea, and only one—*Love baffled by Death*. It is on this that he rings the changes—very beautiful changes they are, touching it deftly now on this side and now on that, dressing it up in all kinds of strange and fantastically beautiful garments, hinting at it subtly through images of pleasure and pain, shadowing it forth in various allegorical ways, proclaiming it fiercely as in the voice of one just bereaved. But always, if we look long enough at poem or picture, we find the trace of this idea; speaking broadly, this is the beginning and the end of his philosophy. We say the end, for with the victory of death the master seems to close his story, though now and then he hints to us that he has heard of a heaven and a hell where all will be set right. Still, these are not part of his saying or his painting; they may be true, but they are not the facts that impress him, they are too faint, too far off, for his pencil or his verse. Or if he tells us of them at all, he does so in such glowing sensuous images, with so resolute an adherence to natural facts, that we recognise only another earth in his *Paradise* or his *Inferno*. Mark, for instance, how the *Blessed Damozel* leans out from the gold bar of heaven.

“And still she bowed herself and stooped
 Out of the circling charm;
 Until her bosom must have made
 The bar she leaned on warm,
 And the lilies lay as if asleep
 Along her bended arm.”

It was said once by a writer anxious to make out a case against the pre-Raphaelite school of modern poetry, that sensuality was one of the chief characteristics of Rossetti's verse, and certain quotations¹ were given to prove this. Time has effectually disposed of that charge, and the misrepresentations on which it was founded have been adequately confuted; but the fact has hardly been sufficiently noticed, that the real ground of the accusation is due to the fact of the poet-painter being unable to dis sever his pictorial from his poetic faculty. He habitually thought (if such an expression is allowable) in terms of painting. He could not dis sever his most purely intellectual ideas, from colour and form, and the intrusion of these physical facts into his poetry, in places where they are unexpected and unnecessary, gives to hasty readers and superficial critics such a wrong impression. And in the same way as he charges a poem with more colour and form than it can well

¹ The above verse was one of the number.

bear as poetry, so does he charge his pictures with a weight of idea, which their form and colour can scarcely realise, and in both he calls upon the spectator to be at once the witness and the interpreter of his work. From this there results in his poetry the following effect—that he is at his finest when he has to tell some plain story, or exemplify some comparatively simple thought, the insertion into which of physical facts will heighten, rather than jar upon the meaning; or in verses which treat intellectual ideas from a purely sensuous basis, such, for instance, as in those sonnets which are concerned with the passion of love. When, however, he seeks to treat either a purely intellectual, or a purely spiritual subject, he fails almost inevitably, and that apparently in painting as well as in poetry. Like Antæus, if he is held off the earth too long his strength fails him. This painter-like quality makes his verse puzzlingly contradictory, for in idea, the poetry is almost without exception of a singularly pure and intellectual character, and very often of high spiritual significance.

Turning from his verse to his painting, the same curious contradiction is forced upon our attention. We find continually in his pictures, that the reproduction of the sensuous part of his subject is interfered with by the strange half-refining, half-abstract, quality of his intellect. This is especially evident in his treatment of the form of the human body, in which he has two methods, both adapted to the same end, or rather, perhaps, both unconsciously tending to the same end. One is to leave out as much as possible all detailed drawing, to suffuse the whole body in a mist of colour, in which no modelling of flesh or structure of bone is clearly visible. The other method is to accentuate those portions of the body, or the features, which best help to express emotion, and so to use and arrange them as to produce a definite emotional idea. The long necks in which so many of his female figures rejoice, the slender hands with fingers turning round one another, the heavy curved lips, and the other physical peculiarities to be traced in his works, are all due to the passionately sensuous, but equally passionately intellectual, nature of Rossetti; they are the record of a man whose sense of beauty was always being disturbed by his sense of feeling.

When all is said and done, this sense of beauty is that upon which his great praise must be founded, and is also the ultimate test by which all painters must be judged. Artists and critics may tell us that this detail is impossible, and the other absurd; the moralist may preach that there is here too morbid an insistence upon one idea; the general public may deplore the lack of their much-loved catchpenny subjects; and the Philistine may laugh at the eccentric form in which Mr. Rossetti's ideas are produced. But if the net result is beautiful, if

the one idea is truly and finely expressed, the chief aim of the painter has been achieved; and the world, which is only unjust for a brief space—too often, alas! the space of a lifetime—will not let the work die. This is the rock upon which so many artists, especially so many modern English and French artists, split; their pictures are frequently possessed of every merit save that one which alone would justify their existence. In this respect the subject of my article is entitled to be considered as a supreme artist. In some of his works, especially in his later ones, when the fatal influence of chloral was beginning to wither his powers, there are distortions and even uglinesses such as can scarcely be condoned, and we cannot help regretting that, throughout a great part of his life, the influence of one type of woman should have been so great as to appear in all his pictures—now as Proserpine, now as the Virgin Mary, and so throughout the range of his poetical fancies, and the old legends with which he occupied his pencil. But when all these deficiencies are subtracted, or allowed for, there remain a series of pictures which have such marvellous glory of colouring, such intensely vivid feeling, and such beauty of detail, that I at least know not where to find their parallel. They are living, breathing poems, at once delicate and strong, passionate and pure, and appear to say the last word possible upon their various subjects.

Take as an example of this, the celebrated picture of the painter's wife, done after her death, and entitled "Beata Beatrix." The subject is simple enough—a three-quarter-length figure of a woman, whose head has fallen slightly backward upon her shoulders in sleep, which we feel will soon be that of death. Fluttering in front of her is a crimson bird, bearing a poppy in its mouth; behind her a sun-dial; while in the distance of the Florentine streets stand Dante and the Angel of Love watching. Descriptions of pictures, as some one says, are stupid things at the best; but here they seem to me even more than usually inadequate. No amount of description could convey any hint of the intense and beautiful peace which marks this painting. It is like that of summer woods at early dawn, before the first bird has begun to sing, and the last star faded. Nor only are the face and expression perfect; the whole picture tells a story with an emphasis only the more clear because of the intense quietude. Like the whisper of a great actress, we hear, and feel the weight of every syllable. And this is fine technically, as well as emotionally, for curiously enough in this, probably his finest picture, Rossetti shows little or none of that wilfulness so frequently present in his works. The drawing, if not very markedly good, is unobtrusive and unobjectionable; the disposition of the drapery (always a strong point with this artist) is simplicity and dignity itself, the position full both of grace and suggestion, is at the same time markedly original, and

represented with the utmost ease ; while of the colouring no one can speak in terms of too high praise. The picture is suffused with a misty sunshine, and all the hues therein are somewhat low in tone ; but into their transparent depths the eye looks down and down, as through the still waters of a lake ; and the effect of the whole is that of some very marvellous piece of quiet music, played at a great distance. This picture, too, gives us a good opportunity of noticing the strange combination of realism and idealism in Rossetti's painting, a combination which is of course due to, and is, indeed, scarcely more than one manifestation of, that habit of mind of which we have spoken above. What may be called the furniture of his pictures, the caskets which his women hold in their hands, the censers and candlesticks and musical instruments which they use, or the flowers or foliage with which they are adorned or surrounded, is almost invariably drawn and painted with the greatest delicacy and skill from the objects themselves. And those who went to the sale, which took place after his death, of the painter's effects must have seen many of the strangely-shaped instruments and brazen vessels which appear in these pictures.

But with all this attention to natural or artificial fact, Rossetti is far from being a realistic painter ; indeed it is only in these subsidiary facts that his realism shows. His manner of painting flesh and drapery is utterly opposed to that which obtains so greatly in the present day, which takes account of every variation of texture, which in fact aims at producing the actual impression on the eye which is produced by the real thing. In the sense that Alma-Tadema is a flesh painter, or M. Lefebvre, Rossetti is none—and would not be if he could. It seems strange that this man, who has been accused so strongly of sensualism, would have undoubtedly said that the modern practice of representing the nude model, was degraded in feeling and inartistic in practice.

What he attempts to do in his painting of flesh, is to combine its translucencies of colour with as much of the form as he can show without making the details prominent, but never to suggest the actual texture of the flesh itself—never to put a nude model on to his canvas.¹ When he paints a woman who shows breast or arm, he does so as frankly as a Greek would have done, and with as absolute a reliance upon its being the right and natural thing. The coarseness which strikes so vividly one who enters the French Salon for the first time, and sees hanging on every side life-size studies of nude models, is entirely absent from his work, nor can any hint of such feeling be found therein. One reason for this lies probably in

¹ Perhaps I should add here that Rossetti, to the best of my belief, never painted a wholly nude figure. I possess a rather curious pen-drawing of his of a nude woman getting out of bed, and holding out her arms for some clothes which a maid-servant is reaching down from a peg ; but what was the date of this, or the meaning of the subject, I do not know.

the fact, which is difficult to account for, but which the history of art proves to be certain, that really great colour can hardly give an impression of coarseness. It seems somehow as if colour were a furnace whose fierce heat burned up all mean and unworthy things. But a still stronger reason is probably that of the painter's own personality,—one which, as I have been trying to show, sought not to clothe physical fact with emotional and intellectual ideas, but to express these ideas in terms of fact. The difference may very likely appear to my readers to be slight and unimportant; to me, I confess, it is the reverse. The man was a poet by nature, he became an artist by education, and owing to an intense desire to express himself in painting as well as in song. The first medium afforded his passionate, Southern spirit the glory which he needed; the last gave an outlet to the melody with which his nature was endowed. The action and reaction were very subtle, and one can see now that while the painting certainly prevented his poetry from being as fine as it might have been; the poetry invariably upheld and dignified his painting even in its wildest moments. Across both, the reflection of the man's own vivid Italian disposition often fell with startling effect, obtruding itself and its feelings into every variety of subject, and in all kinds of diverse manners; and one of the strangest qualities in this painter's strange art, is the continual conflict, both in his paintings and his poems, of the passionate egoism which was the natural bent of his mind, intensified by the circumstances of his life, and the sense of dramatic fitness which is, perhaps, his strongest intellectual characteristic.

I hardly know whether this conflict shows most clearly in poetry or in painting; it is perfectly evident in both, and his finest work in either art is to be found, as we should naturally expect, in such subjects as those in which the dramatic presentment of the poem or painting is little more than an echo of some personal mood. This gives their intense power to such poems as *Jenny* and *The Last Confession*, and in a minor degree to the ballad and the paintings of *The Blessed Damozel*. This gives point and meaning to the pictures of Beatrice and Dante; and again, this interferes continually with his dramatic realisation of many poetical ideas with which he deals, but from which he cannot expel his own personality, and which appear, in his presentment of them, so tinged with subjective influences as to be dramatically feeble.

I have no wish to dwell on this point; only we must remember that the man being what he was,—out of suits with fortune, and himself, from the beginning of his life, having suffered the great loss of his wife almost as soon as he had been united to her, being subsequently possessed by the strange beauty of the face which he has



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made so familiar to us, having his health ruined by indulgence in chloral, and his spirit broken by one of the most painful diseases which a man can bear; having become as suspicious of his friends as his enemies, and living in almost complete isolation, it is not wonderful that, towards the close of his life, his painting grew to have little more than a desponding echo of the earlier beauty: an oft-repeated cry of grief or weariness.

If, however, we take his work in the best period, between the dates, that is to say, of 1850 and 1870, and look with especial care at the earlier drawings, we find that if the painter repeated himself in later years, he did so from no lack of invention or imagination, and that his youth, indeed, shows an inventiveness and a fancy which are only too exuberant and are apt to waste their power by being too lavishly displayed. In the Fine Arts Club at Savile Row there is at the present time¹ a collection of Rossettis which is especially rich in his early water-colour works, and in these alone is to be found sufficient artistic material to supply an ordinary painter for his lifetime. We cannot stay to mention these separately, but must just call attention to the very lovely one which represents the first meeting of Dante and Beatrice, a drawing which, for bright beauty of colour, originality of treatment, and vivid grasp of its subject, is perhaps the finest Rossetti ever conceived. In this, as in many others of the same period, not a trace is to be found of the heavy despairing state of mind which shows in his later work. They are bright, almost blithe, in conception, and are painted with a simple purity of colour which is akin only to that used by the very early Italian painters. Looking at these, we understand the early work of Millais and Hunt, and see whence it derived its inspiration. And it is curious to notice that these works are infinitely more English in the style of face and personality than those of later years.

A word must be said of the one scene of English modern life which the painter attempted—the picture known by the name of “Found,” and drawn in illustration of a ballad by Mr. W. B. Scott, one of Rossetti’s oldest friends. This represents a woman *found* in London by her quondam lover, after many a year of shameful life. He is holding her hands and looking down towards her; she has shrunk away from his touch and gaze, and is crouching against a low wall. In the background is a bridge over the river; by the side of the man stands, not without its added touch of terrible meaning, a cart with a netted calf bleating piteously. The time is early morning, and the bridge and distance are blue and misty; the whole picture is pale and cold in its effect of colour. This the Academy catalogue informs us, not quite correctly, was painted in 1882; as a

¹ *i.e.* 1883.

matter of fact it was, I believe, painted in 1868, or thereabouts, and was only slightly altered, and, my informant assures me, considerably spoilt, in 1882. However this may be, there is some intrinsic evidence for it to be found in the small pen-and-ink drawing for the same subject, which is now being exhibited at the Fine Arts Club, wherein the face of the countryman is different and far finer in expression than in the finished picture. The chief interest centres in the face of the woman, and it is the extraordinary power which Mr. Rossetti has shown in this portion of the picture which renders the whole so supremely interesting. Few artists have cared to grapple with an idyll of London life such as this, painting the naked truth with no extenuating circumstances, and many of those who see this picture are no doubt excessively shocked at being brought face to face with such a scene. But it is a fitting corollary to the painter's poem of *Jenny*—the last word which was needed to render that story complete. In very truth Mr. Rossetti has been able to imprint on a woman's face, seen in one supreme moment, traces of all the gay, reckless, shameful, shameless, horrible life she has led since first she lay amongst *the blown grass* in the meadows—

“And wondered where the city was.”

It is all here—past innocence and present guilt, and almost-forgotten love and honour, struggling to drown memory that will not die, and shame, and terror, and despair. Not a pleasant picture, but one which goes to the root of the matter with which it deals; one which is, as Ruskin once said of a somewhat similar painting by Mr. Holman Hunt, “powerful to meet full in the front the social evil of the age in which it is painted; to waken into mercy the cruel thoughtlessness of youth, and subdue the severities of judgment into the sanctity of compassion.” Looking at this picture, at the poem of *Jenny* and *The Last Confession*, and at the ballads of *Rose Mary* and *'Twixt Holmscote and Hurstcote*, we touch, I think, upon the real strength of Rossetti, a strength which underlay all his eccentricities and weaknesses. He never paltered with the facts of the case, no matter how terrible; but in the life of others, as well as in his own, cut down to the truth. No wonder he gave offence to the decorous, and was a stumbling-block to the shallow. What do either want with unpleasant fact, told in the barest and least conventional terms? And Rossetti's frankness reached almost to the verge of cynicism; he spared others no more than he did himself.

Throughout all, however, and despite the curious garb in which he disguised his meaning, truth was always his aim; the nature of the man was sincere throughout. In an age when painters have few beliefs, and hold those very lightly, this man scarcely stirred a step in art except in obedience to his own inspiration, and was strong enough, despite all his failings, to modify the

practices, if he did not actually change the creeds, of half the artists of his time. To him, as we have said, Millais owed his poetical inspiration, and his most beautiful pictures were painted under that influence; to him Holman Hunt was even more indebted; from him, though soon able to strike out a line for himself, sprang Mr. Burne-Jones, fully equipped for the fight, like a second Minerva, from the brain of a second Jove; to his early friendship with William Morris at Oxford, when he went there to paint the frescoes in the Union, we probably owe the determining impulse which set the author of the *Earthly Paradise* on the road to that decoration which has changed the look of half the houses in London, and substituted art for ugliness all over the kingdom; and to him probably, if we could trace it back, we owe, almost equally with Ruskin, the growth of the feeling that art was more than a mere trade, and that an artist has duties to himself and his art, as well as to his pocket and his public.

For his fame it is probably unfortunate that he did not confine himself to poetry, or that he did not begin painting earlier, study it more rigorously, and confine himself to it more entirely; but for the world at large I doubt whether he could have done, being what he was, better work. He was to all young artists and young writers a tower of strength, a light to encourage them to despise conventions, and to give up their lives to their art. He was, in fact, a standing protest against the idols of the market—an influence that made, as Arnold would say, for artistic righteousness. In the minds of hundreds of young men, who never even saw him, there lurked a satisfaction that down at Chelsea a man was living, painting, and writing, without caring a brass farthing for anybody's opinion, for that is the one temper that produces good artistic work. The difficulties under which a young artist, be he painter or poet, labours, are so enormous, the circumstances of the age are so much against his profession, and the confusion of counsellors is so great, that unless he can close his ears, and possess his soul in patience, it is a thousand to one against his producing first-rate work. The comparative isolation of Rossetti's life did not produce his shortcomings, though no doubt it narrowed his range of sympathies; it was his persistent dwelling upon one idea, and the unfortunate coincidence which gave him models of a physical type which exactly fitted the artistic peculiarities of his temperament. The conjunction of these circumstances forced him into one groove of thought, and held him there like a vice; and there are few things more pathetically evident about any modern painter, than the way in which he struggled, and struggled in vain, to free himself from the chain of feeling and thought which his own hands had bound round him.

But his influence was scarcely the less for his personal short-

comings—they proved him human even to his simple enthusiastic disciples, and they were of the kind that bring pity rather than contempt, for they were as much the result of idiosyncrasy and misfortune, as of misconduct—from the first the man, with all his genius, could scarcely have been successful or happy in the ordinary way.

What place in the history of art and literature his achievements will eventually hold is difficult even to surmise, but one or two points may be confidently asserted. In the future, Rossetti will stand less as the painter-poet than as the leader of the great artistic movement of England in the nineteenth century; his work will be regarded and prized even more for what it effected, than for its intrinsic merit. As we get a little farther removed in time from the controversies which have raged round the modern schools of poetry and painting, it will be seen that his was the central figure of the combat, his hand raised the standard round which the foemen rallied. Two or three only of the poems are likely to survive the taste of the present day, and of these *Jenny* is far the most important, and will always stand as a statement, in singularly strong and beautiful words, of that problem of womanhood, for which, as yet, no one has found a solution. *The Last Confession* is, perhaps, the most complete of all the poems, but it touches on no such universal chord as that with which *Jenny* is concerned, and is interesting chiefly as a study of morbid love and jealousy; and all the other poems, beautiful as they are, will, we fear, be neglected in future years, if only because of their dependence upon a special phase of feeling which is not one with which most readers have any sympathy. They are not too egoistic to last, but they are egoistic in too unusual, too subtle a way, and the strangeness of their form, natural as it was to the man who wrote them, will probably in after years make them appear half affected, and half incomprehensible. Perhaps the crowning misfortune for a poet, when his chances of immortality are being considered, is that men should read him less for what he says than for what may be called the atmosphere of his verse—when he pleases our senses without stirring our sympathies. This is to a certain extent the case with Rossetti. The young, the healthy, and the brave may delight in his writing for its music, and even find a half-pleasure in its iteration of grief. But it is impossible that they should sympathise with the work as a whole; the cry of pain is too continuous, too long sustained, followed out into too many various directions. The thought comes across us as we read, that though the poet was sincere, his poetry is not; that these fancies which, wherever they begin, end only in the grave, are not the realities of life and action, and have no true bearing thereon. And the doubt is apt to rise as to the reality of the sorrow we find so exquisitely expressed. The roughness, the impatience of great

grief are wholly lacking ; we might even suspect occasionally that in his own way the poet is enjoying his tragedies, is cherishing his tears. And the consequence is that one grows into a habit of listening to him much as one does to the prattle of a child—glad when he says anything wise, tender, or beautiful, but attaching little or no importance to the thread of his discourse.

The place of his painting is even harder to determine. Many artists would tell us that it is not painting at all, and from one point of view they would be right. But is this really the question ? Another age may deny that the modern French school are painters, or that there is any painting save that of Germany and the Low Countries ; or may erect some new standard, or return to some old one which is now forgotten. Who shall decide what is and what is not painting, if we once leave the broad track of beautiful colour applied to a plane surface so as to produce a beautiful result ? And if the decision can be made so as to exclude the work of which we are talking, we should have to consider whether, if this be not painting, it is not something else than painting which we require. This is at all events—Art. There is no doubt of that ; and the best examples possess three qualities, which it is excessively rare to find in combination. They are at once passionate, poetical, and refined, and defy the spectator to associate them with ideas of manufacture. Such as it is, the work has evidently grown from its author's character, like a flower from the earth, and bears scarcely a trace of another's influence. The hope of immortality lies in this fact. Copies die, but for originals, however imperfect, there is always a chance. It is, I imagine, as unlikely that future generations will understand the meaning of their author, as that they will care to follow out his curious life and character ; but the qualities of imagination and passion, and the technical perfection of the colouring, will probably secure these works a place in the history of art. For as poems in colour, the world has seen nothing finer since the days of Titian.

I would apologise to my readers for the desultory character of these notes, did I not feel, and feel most strongly, that the time has not yet come in which it is possible to estimate in any complete degree the scope and character of Dante Rossetti's work. Any endeavour to do so would inevitably trench upon personal matters, and give pain to many people. I have tried, probably with unsuccess, to steer a middle course, and to suggest the truth so far as this could be done without offence. And summing up that truth in a sentence, it comes to this—that Rossetti's was a true artistic genius, wedded to a nature which was almost equally passionate and intellectual, an Italian rather than an English character, and that though the circumstances of his life thwarted

his powers to an unusual extent, they did not alter in any essential respect the character of his work. Under no conceivable circumstances, I think, would the man's genius have driven him straight and fast along any given road, and to a predetermined end: the seeds of contradiction were in himself as well as in his surroundings. His intellect and his senses were like two millstones, and would have ground each other to pieces had there been no interposing medium. In judging him we must not forget that he was an alien in race and more than an alien in character; neither his virtues nor his vices were such as we display. We can at least thank him for this, that he broke with one fierce wrench the bonds of artistic convention, and taught English artists that they might dare to paint and write their thoughts and feelings without regard to prohibition, or convention.



MY HEART'S IN THE HIGHLANDS

JOSEPH FARQUHARSON

X.—THE PAINTING OF HOLMAN HUNT.



THAT is the prevailing characteristic, the leading “note,” to use the art slang of to-day, in this painter’s work? Well, Hunt has been painting for nearly fifty years, and the main results of his life’s work could be got into one small room. Given that the artist has been, as is notoriously the case, an indefatigable worker during all this period, we can see by this how “thorough” has been his execution of each picture; and thoroughness is, indeed, the most vital quality of his painting. Artists of more spontaneous impulse we have amongst us, but for men who have carried out that impulse to a degree equal to Hunt, we may look in vain. Never, perhaps, in the history of art were there great pictures with which it was so easy to find fault, and which it was so impossible to disregard—pictures whose peculiarities irritated so many and yet interested all. It is the old story, if a man has anything to say he is always worth listening to, and this artist has much that he wants to tell us. Briefly, then, the key to Hunt’s art is this thoroughness, this desire, and more than desire, this determination to get to the very heart of his subject—to its very heart of hearts. And this, too, is the reason why no one can pass his work by, and, perhaps, partially the reason why so many find it unsatisfactory. For the majority of people live in grooves of habit in their visual impressions, just as they do in their daily occupations. Accustomed to look but little at nature, and that little with languid, and for the most part, preoccupied interest, they accept unhesitatingly whatever rendering a painter gives them, so long as it is of the ordinary conventional kind; but directly the groove is forsaken, they are forced either to acknowledge or defend their ignorance; and what defence is so easy as to say oneself is right, and the painter is wrong. It is a hard saying, but the truth is always offensive, save to the true. People will put up, either in pictures or life, with almost anything that does

not come too closely home to them—does not force them to reconsider their conventionalities, either of sight or action. Does any thinking man in England—I ask this question in all seriousness—does any thinking man in England who knows Holman Hunt's work, doubt that he might have been a Royal Academician a dozen times over if he had only conformed ever so little to the conventional creed? Had he painted babies in white satin smocks, or old gentlemen in ruffs, or Venetian vagabonds, or Highland cattle, how gladly he would have been welcomed to the Academic ranks; with what ease and security he might have gained a fortune and a baronetcy, and lived in a Kensington palace to the end of his days! But fancy an Academy rewarding or honouring a man who has simply done his best for art, who has given every hour of his life to producing great pictures, and neglected to fill his pockets.

Take, lest any one should think these only vague generalities, a little detail. A few years ago half artistic London was raving about the painting of the draperies of a picture by Mabuse, which was being exhibited at the "Old Masters." Now, in "The Shadow of the Cross," the blue robe of the Virgin is painted with a perfection which has all the character of clear, brilliant colour, reality, and completeness, of Mabuse's work on twenty times the scale, and possesses, moreover, what Mabuse's art did not possess, the qualities of denoting texture, while lending itself to the lines of the form beneath. Since these Flemish painters, no one has ever painted drapery at all till Mr. Hunt and Rossetti. Take another point—expression. Now, of all the merits of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, this merit of expression was perhaps the chief. Rossetti, Millais, and Hunt, all sought it, and all in different ways gained their end. But as Millais is undoubtedly peculiarly celebrated in this respect, it is worth while to note the difference between the emotions (and their expression) of his men and women, and those of our present subject. The difference is, in the main, one of sentiment—sentiment as opposed to passion. A trick (I use the word in no contemptuous sense) of the eyes and mouth—a pleading expression—which throws the character, as it were, upon one's special protection, and which gives a peculiar softened beauty to the face which he depicts; this is, briefly speaking, Millais' habitual way of exciting our interest. If we think of his most noted subject-pictures, from "The Huguenot" to the present day, we find this gentle, beautiful pathos always the main point. Sometimes we have it tinged with the sentiment of self-sacrifice, as in "The Huguenot"; sometimes with that of duty, as in "The Black Brunswicker"; sometimes with that of love and terror, as in "The Proscribed Royalist"; sometimes with that of reflection, or appeal, or sadness, as the girl considering what her answer should be to her lover's letter, "Yes or No?" the young wife asking her husband to "Trust Her"; or

in the many girl-pictures in which, under various fanciful titles, this artist has given us more of the dreaminess, the bearable sadness, and the unconscious pathos of childhood, than has been set down elsewhere. A question, an appeal, a regret—is it not true that every Millais picture is expressive of one of these? Speaking quite clearly, is it not true that it is emotion of the circulating-library kind which we have here, in which sentimentalism is chosen in place of passion, and in which love bears an undue relation to the other affairs of life? Turn to Hunt's work and we see the difference at once; the painter's mind is set in another key; the emotion does not interest him so long as it is unconnected with thought. The faces of his characters are rarely—we might almost say never—simply loving, trusting, or mournful; they are instinct with complicated feelings—are in process of change from one emotion to another, even as the bodies of his characters are almost invariably in change from one action to another. For—and this, be it noted, is one of the vital differences between these great painters—Hunt is always successful in painting action, Millais in painting rest.

Broadly speaking, we may say that the sentimental finds no place in Hunt's art; love, with him, is too strong a passion, of too vital issues, to be treated lightly. Compare for the extremes of difference such pictures as the famous "Light of the World" and the "Awakened Conscience." The first showing us a face, beautiful indeed, but even more powerful, beneficent and calm, in which kindness and irresistible authority are most wonderfully blended; the second, filled with jarring chords of emotion and perverted feeling, of shattered peace and ruined life. It is no exaggeration and no imaginative reading to say that from the man's face in the one picture and the other, there look out at us a god and a devil; for, as I read it, the tragedy of the "Awakened Conscience" is hardly to be found so much in the woman's face, instinct though it be with sudden, awful remembrance of what she was and is, but in her companion's ghastly indifference to her feeling. It is absurd to attempt a precise description of this picture when it has been once so finely given as by Ruskin, but I may, perhaps, be pardoned for pointing out one detail of real, if possibly unintentional significance, which our great writer has left unmentioned. In the large looking-glass, which forms a portion of the background to this composition, is reflected the window of the opposite side of the room, and through it a garden bright with sunshine and spring foliage. Against this, the reflection of the woman shows as it would actually do under such conditions of light—dark and almost shapeless, just as a blot upon the brightness. The moral is too evident to need pointing out. But, indeed, in this picture there are not one but a score of details which show the intense intellectual effort of the painter, as well as his emotional perception and power.

Let us turn to the "Light of the World," a picture which is, in some respects, a work apart from the rest. This is, if I may use the expression, one painted from within rather than from without. I find in every line the trace of an intense imaginative conception which is somewhat at variance with the usual effect given by the majority of Holman Hunt's works. Perhaps I shall make my meaning clear if I say that the keynote of this picture is unity, and of the others, diversity. We can imagine a spectator of the most opposed artistic creed saying, "If this be pre-Raphaelitism, I will become a convert to-morrow," for in this composition, varied and minute as is the detail, the central thought and figure entirely dominate the work. I doubt whether, out of every ten people who look at this picture, there are more than two or three who see anything clearly but the central figure; nay, even to one who knows the composition well, it is difficult to recall the details; the barred and ivy-bound door, the grass and brambles; even the double crown and the white robe are lost, or rather, are only dimly felt, in comparison with the face of Christ. I have dwelt upon this subject, for it leads to the consideration of why this work is so much more popular than any other painting by this artist, and why so many people are intolerant of Mr. Holman Hunt's paintings. The reasons for the popularity and the power of this picture are (though it is rarely that the same cause accounts for both) the same. The "Light of the World" was painted under the stress of an intense religious conviction, the subject being, to use the artist's own significant word, "vouchsafed" to him. He believes firmly that subject, detail, and treatment were revealed to him for a distinct purpose, and in elaborate detail. Evidently a picture painted in such a manner will inevitably touch the heart more nearly than any purely intellectual work. Not only is the effect given to the work more powerful, but of a different kind; it mounts into the region of feeling, and is inspired by a similar emotion to that of the subject; and in a religious picture this is three-parts of the battle.

Perhaps after the "Light of the World," the "Scapegoat" is the most widely known of all Mr. Hunt's scriptural subjects, and practically this is a landscape picture. The goat, which gives the title to the work, though finely conceived and painted, and truly striking the intended note of suffering and isolation, is, after the first look at the subject, forgotten in the consideration of the gaunt, desolate land, with covering of crystallised salt, and bleaching skeletons, of the narrow strip of sea, drearily dark under the shadow of the surrounding mountains, and above all of the peaks of the mountains, as they rise flushed with the scarlet and crimson of sunset, into that wonderful sky, which the artist seems to have painted with the actual gold and purple of Nature herself. There is a good opportunity to

notice, with regard to this work, how infinitely the dreariness of the scene is increased by the two matters which ought, from a conventional point of view, to take some of it away—the presence of a living animal, and the presentation of the landscape under a flush of beautiful light. Under no grey sky, with no hint of human occupation to connect it with ourselves, could this end of the Dead Sea look so dreary as here.

“Strayed Sheep” takes us to another side of the painter’s art. The picture represents a kind of little glade of rocks, brambles, ferns, wild-flowers, etc., with the sheep in the immediate foreground; in the distance we see the slopes of the downs and a bit of sea. The whole is in the most brilliant light, and every item of grass and flower, of the sheep’s fleece, etc., is given with great elaboration and distinction. The remark which I should like to make first about this work is that the picture is peculiarly a happy one. Albeit in every respect pre-Raphaelite, the work is one of those which the people most opposed—as they think and say—to pre-Raphaelitism, nevertheless like. This, moreover, is a picture in which the artist seems for once not to have had any ulterior motive, but just to have gone down to a lonely place in lovely weather, and worked away happily, without too much thought. And, without dwelling further on the technical character, this brings us to the consideration of what is at the bottom of both Mr. Hunt’s excellences and faults as an artist. Of his excellences, since it spurs him on to overcome difficulties which have seldom been grappled with, and to realise his subjects in utmost minutiae; of his defects, since it prevents him from seeing the boundary between the possible and the impossible, the desirable and the undesirable. He wants painting to do more than lies within its power,—to perform the office not only of Art, but of religion and literature. He is so anxious to have his meaning made clear to the utmost degree that he frequently forgets that the most subtle meanings are sometimes, and not seldom, those which vanish when they are too clearly brought forward. The consequence is that he is always treading a narrow boundary-line between the sublime and the ridiculous, for Art cannot be concocted of so many beautiful, and so many emblematical objects. A picture may be thought out till it is in description on paper a perfect demonstration of its subject, and may nevertheless fail to convey its meaning as essentially as a rough sketch which has been drawn, so to speak, in molten thought from the crucible of the imagination. The rock upon which Mr. Hunt splits is, I venture to say, this—that he does not sufficiently remember that true pre-Raphaelitism does not insist equally upon every detail, but insists upon each detail *in relative proportion to the importance*. When I say the importance, I mean, of course, importance with regard to the chosen subject. The gain to significance of the perfect rendering of all the

subordinate facts of a composition is right so long, and only so long, as no fraction of significance of the main subject is lost thereby; directly the detail begins to encumber the meaning, directly it does not fulfil a definite function in the realisation of the scene, the detail is wrong. For a picture is not a treatise upon a subject, but a rendering of a scene, a thought, or a feeling, and we cannot follow out in it many complicated lines of thought; what it really teaches, must be taught through one comparatively simple idea.

I shall not describe here "The Finding of our Saviour in the Temple;" the picture has been exhibited so widely throughout England, and is well known by both engraving and description. Suffice it to say that this is the most elaborate of Hunt's religious works, the most brilliant in colour and most painstaking in work. Nor shall I speak of the dark maiden standing against a gorgeous Egyptian sunset, entitled "The After-Glow," which was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. A few words, however, must be given to the most quiet and perhaps the most poetic of all Hunt's scenes of modern life, "The Ship," which bears a motto from the poem *In Memoriam*, commencing—

" Fair ship, that from the Italian shore,
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Sailest the placid ocean-plains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er."

This shows us the deck of a P. and O. steamer at night, with a sailor at the wheel, a Lascar bending down to the saloon skylight to talk to some one within, an old Anglo-Indian soldier with a white puggaree round his wide-awake, a woman leaning her arm upon the bulwarks and looking out into the night,—these are all the actors in the scene; and it is worthy of notice how entirely Hunt has succeeded in presenting them to us quite clearly and plainly, and yet carefully avoided concentrating our attention upon any or all of them. The passage of the ship through the night is the subject of this picture, and the clearness with which the artist has realised this scene, and given us its very essence is hardly to be overpraised. It was the fashion when this work was first exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery to run it down, and call it ordinary and conventional; but time will remedy that, and people are beginning to see, though slowly, that there is more true imagination in realising the essence of a contemporary subject, than in reproducing the outside form of an antique life; that we had better have true pictures of what is nearest to us in feeling, thought, and action, than false ones of what lies far behind, and is made beautiful, as are the shadows of the hills, by remoteness only.

One other picture only shall be quoted here, and of this I will give my impression written when the work was first exhibited in August,



SOUTHWELL, NOTTS. Peter de Wint.
From the original Drawing in the collection of the late William Quilter.

1885. It may be that I have exaggerated in recording the pleasure I received from this work ; but I have not since seen the picture and prefer therefore to leave the estimate untouched.

“Mr. Holman Hunt's great picture of 'The Triumph of the Innocents' is at last finished, and is now being exhibited in Bond Street, at the Fine Art Society's Rooms. A work which has taken more than seven years to conceive and execute, has at least one title to consideration which is wanting to most of the hurried art of modern days, and seems almost to belong to those earlier times when pictures were painted in honour of the Deity or praise of the King, and intended to be lasting monuments of all that one man's skill could produce to glorify his religion or exalt his patron. We live so fast nowadays, that to hear that a painter in the midst of us has spent so long over a single picture gives us something of a shock ; it appears to be an anachronism, like Gordon's refusal of money-rewards for 'simply doing his duty.' Nevertheless, in the centre of Bond Street, with Mr. Gullick's 'great mirror picture' on one hand, and Mr. Van Beers' *cocottes* on the other, here hangs 'The Triumph of the Innocents,' attracting what notice it may from the English public. Descriptions of pictures are futile things at best, for no words that were ever coined can describe the simplest piece of fine colour or fine form so as to realise it for their reader ; and all that can be rightly conveyed is what may be called the literary quality of the painting—the emotional effect which its tints and shapes produce upon the mind. The time is towards dawn : the scene, a long plain, bounded in the distance with low mountains, amongst which watch-fires are burning ; near the foreground some great trees break the monotony of the fields, and stretch a net-work of foliage and branches across the sky. In the foreground of the picture, Joseph is leading the mule bearing the Virgin and Saviour, and surrounding, following, and preceding him are a band of spirit-children strewing the way with flowers, and accompanying and protecting the pilgrims to Egypt. The scene is painted under a double light—that of the natural scene and that proceeding from the children. These, who represent the spirits of the martyred innocents, are surrounded by haloes of vivid colour, and tread upon prismatic bubbles. Such are the bald facts of the design. The idea, it will be allowed, is a singularly fine and significant one ; if ever art mystic has an excuse, it is in the treatment of such a subject as this ; and it would hardly have been possible to introduce supernatural element into a picture with a more beautiful intention. It should be noticed, in passing, that the children who accompany

the flight of Joseph and Mary are supposed, in Mr. Hunt's picture, to be invisible to them, and only seen by the infant Saviour, who is leaning down towards one of them, laughing.

“ It seems to the present writer that a work of this kind presents several distinct problems to the critic and the picture-lover, each of which deserves to be dealt with separately before the work can be estimated as a whole. First comes the question of whether the picture is technically so fine as to be worthy of serious consideration ; then whether the painter has so told his story as to justify his interpretation of the subject and his departure from traditional renderings ; and, lastly, one has to decide whether, with regard to both technical and emotional characteristics, the painting is of such quality as to take rank as a great religious picture—a picture, that is, which treats worthily the greatest tradition of our race.

“ First, with regard to its technical qualities. I am not going to tell here the history, now well known, of the original picture, its vicissitudes from the time when it was begun in Jerusalem, upon a piece of Syrian linen bought in the bazaar, to its final abandonment a year or two ago. Suffice it to say that the present work is not the one that was first commenced, and which the present writer saw two or three times in course of painting. It is, upon the whole, very much finer, though it has possibly lost a little of the freshness which an original conception possesses ; with regard to its *technique*, it possesses all Mr. Hunt's peculiarities, both of excellence and defect, though, owing to the peculiarity of the subject, the deficiencies are, in my opinion, less noticeable than usual. The excessive brilliancy and variety of the tints which this artist habitually uses in his flesh-painting, and the absence therefrom of any harmonising influence of atmosphere, is less felt when all the bright faces are, as they are here, seen under the influence of a supernatural light. Again, one of Mr. Hunt's chief technical peculiarities is a certain hard veracity of detail, which, as it were, forces truth down one's throat at the sword's point. In the present picture, owing to the subdued light in which all the natural details and the principal figures are painted, this veracity is kept within tolerable limits. We do not feel, as many of us felt in the same painter's picture of ‘ The Shadow of the Cross,’ as if the whole conception was full of some minor detail, such as the shavings. There was a kind of realism about many of Mr. Hunt's earlier pictures which sometimes drifted perilously near to burlesque, and was only saved by the painter's evident sincerity and earnestness. With regard to the colour of the present picture, there will no doubt be very different opinions ;

as we have said, the flesh-tints of the children have that extreme brilliant crudity, and show that tendency to see purples and greens and yellows and pinks in little patches such as all Mr. Hunt's earlier work has shown—most noticeable of all, perhaps, in his portraits of his son and daughter, exhibited some time ago at the Grosvenor Gallery.

“The landscape portion, however, and the principal figures, are very fine in colour—deep, yet glowing, as the finest colour always must be, with no tendency to blackness, and yet with the most perfect harmony of the tints employed, giving a result of truth to nature, both in the mystery and the beauty of an Eastern night, such as the present writer at least has never seen surpassed. The great difficulty in pictures on this subject has always been the face of the Virgin; and in the present case, it is doubtful how far Mr. Hunt has been successful. He has chosen to represent her as rather an older, more careworn woman than is customary; and perhaps in avoiding the ‘plum-box’ style of beauty he has run into the opposite extreme. The Joseph is a magnificent piece of drawing. Probably, from an artist’s point of view, the best thing in the picture is the movement of his body as he leads the mule forward, while his head turns for an instant to mark the watch-fires which are burning behind the fugitives. The painting of the picture, as opposed to its drawing and colour, varies in no essential degree from the artist’s previous work. It is careful in the extreme, laboured, and, to use a studio word, ‘tight.’ From the point of view of brush-work it has few merits, there is no hint of mystery in its procedure, it is unlike anything but itself. Perhaps some notion of its peculiarity may be gained by comparing it rather to a mosaic than a painting. It seems to be done painfully, bit by bit, and worked over till all trace of its process is removed. It would be true to say that it is the absolute negative of all the French theories of painting; indeed, this is true of more than the brush-work of the picture. A great deal more might be said upon this question, but probably our readers would scarcely care to follow out technical details further, and we shall confine ourselves to noting that, as a piece of composition, this is the finest of Mr. Hunt’s works; and the figures, both real and supernatural, are combined in a very beautiful wavy line, which aids the desired sense of movement very materially.

“As to the question whether the painter has so told his story as to justify this interpretation, we should answer it in the affirmative, and for this reason. When an artist deals with a well-worn theme, there are only two courses—successful courses—

open to him. One is, to treat it as all other men have done, and to rely upon his transcendent power to make the ordinary, unusually fine; the other, to select some new interpretation which, by its ingenuity or beauty, will throw new light upon the subject, or invest it with fresh attraction. Mr. Hunt has chosen the latter, and has undoubtedly succeeded in rousing great interest, and instituting a fresh conception of his subject. His idea is a beautiful one in itself, and is thoroughly carried out to the very utmost of the painter's ability. One sees this at once on looking at the picture. This is a true man's work—beautiful, imperfect, struggling, failing, and succeeding in various ways and proportions; but certainly there is in it that firm impress of a human soul, that tendency to struggle towards the light, which makes nearly all sincere effort beautiful, despite its partial failure. Just think of what a different state English art would have been in, if in the last hundred years or so we had had only ten pictures a year such as this instead of ten thousand such as we have had! For every picture painted in this way, with the utmost of the artist's strength and the keenest of the artist's emotions, results in a definite gain to the world. It is literally true that it is only art produced in this temper which is great for all time. To have within the frame of a canvas or on the marble of a statue all the power and all the feeling which one man had to give—this is what a great piece of art means, this is why many pictures and statues of early times touch us more keenly in their incompleteness than others in their perfection. In the best sense of the words, therefore, we think that, many defects notwithstanding, this is a great religious picture. It is great in its actual definite achievement, its fine colour, its mastery of natural fact, its successful presentation of its subject, its originality of conception, its vigorous drawing, and in the patient, unwearied skill and thought which are evident in every line and every hue. It is great, because it is the record of a man's endurance in high aims, and his conquest over numberless difficulties; it is great because it is not produced from devotion to the idols of the market, nor in deference to popular fashions. And it is religious, not only in the consecration of its subject, but because its artist has given every power of his mind and body to do it justice, and because every line of its canvas owes its loveliness, not only to the painter's skill, but to his fidelity to Nature, man, and God."

ADDENDA TO THE PAINTINGS OF HOLMAN HUNT.

The names and dates of both Millais' and Rossetti's principal

works are well known, and complete lists of them exist in various Memoirs and Critical Essays, but so far as I know there is no such record of Holman Hunt's work. The following list does not profess to be exhaustive, but it, I believe, includes the more important examples of the painter: the dates (where given) are only approximate, and chiefly refer to the year in which the picture was first exhibited—

I.	Dr. Rochecliffe at Woodstock (about)	.	.	1847
II.	Flight of Madeline and Porphyro	.	.	1848
III.	Rienzi	.	.	1849
III.A.	Portrait of Dante G. Rossetti	.	.	1850
IV.	Claudio and Isabella	.	.	1850
V.	The Christian Missionary	.	.	1850
VI.	Valentine and Sylvia	.	.	1851
VII.	The Hireling Shepherd	.	.	1852
VIII.	Strayed Sheep	.	.	1852
IX.	The Light of the World	.	.	1854
X.	The Awakened Conscience	.	.	1854
XI.	The Scapegoat	.	.	1856
XII.	The Finding of our Saviour in the Temple	.	.	1860
XIII.	London Bridge on the Night of the Marriage of the Prince of Wales	.	.	1862
XIV.	The After-Glow in Egypt	.	.	1868
XV.	The Shadow of Death	.	.	1869-73
XVI.	Isabella and the Pot of Basil
XVII.	{ An Italian Child Street Scene near Cairo The Plains of Esdraelon }	(exhibited)	.	1877
XVIIA.	Holman Hunt's Son	.	.	1880
XVIII.	The Triumph of the Innocents	.	.	1878-1885
XVIII.A.	Portrait of Professor Owen	.	.	1886
XIX.	May Day on Magdalen Tower	.	.	1890

The water-colours and drawings in pencil and ink are too numerous to mention here. Most of the former were exhibited at the Old Water-Colour Society between the years 1865 and 1885. Mr. Hunt rarely paints in water-colour now. Replicas or finished studies, mostly small, have been made by the artist of "The Scapegoat," "The Light of the World," "The Finding of our Saviour," and "The Triumph of the Innocents," and, I think, of "The After-Glow." The "Strayed Sheep" was begun as a replica of a portion of "The Hireling Shepherd." A very beautiful drawing of "The Lady of Shalott" was contributed by Hunt to the illustrated Tennyson published by Moxon, to which Rossetti and Millais also contributed.

CŒLEBS AT HOME.

Happily, we all shoot at the moon with ineffectual arrows. . . . O toiling hands of mortals ! O unwearied feet, travelling ye know not whither ! Soon, soon it appears to you, you must come forth on some conspicuous hill-top, and but a little way farther, against the setting sun, descry the spires of El Dorado. Little do ye know your own blessedness ; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour.

Virginibus Puerisque : R. LOUIS STEVENSON.

Do I view this world as a vale of tears ?
Nay, reverend sir, not I.—ROBERT BROWNING.



O begin is to end ; every fresh start is in one sense a *finis*, and ere the new things can be experienced, the new countries seen, the new friends tried and approved, there must come a change in the ancient fashion ; a farewell to well-known scenes ; and to all who helped, or hindered, as in the old days of joy and sorrow. We must say *good-bye* or ever we can start on the paths wherein we shall see their faces and touch their hands no more. The adventure must needs be a perilous one ; we are for ever enacting the old story of Pizarro, and as we plunge forward into the heart of an unknown country, the sky behind is red with the flame of our burning ships, and of that cargo of memories, associations, friendships, and perhaps dearer things still, in which was once all our interest and all our joy.

Few people realise till comparatively late in age how difficult to fashion is even the smallest niche for a human life ; a niche which shall provide some circle of sympathy and companionship beside the actual provision of physical necessities, of food, shelter, and clothing. In our hot youth especially we know naught of this : we rush gladly to the most distant and alien lands ; we fling our loves and our friends this way and that with a fine flourish of generosity, and cry *Omne solum forti patria*, whilst fond hearts are trembling for our fortunes, and fond eyes are hidden in tears lest they should see us go. I often think that it is not wisdom which is so lacking to the young, but feeling ; they are, for the most part, wise enough to enjoy ; and



SWEETHEARTS. — E. K. JOHNSON

what better wisdom does age bring to them? But how rarely are they wise enough to feel! and in the after-days, when we look up as from our lesson-books, and see around us the relics of the passion and the enterprise of youth, trying to realise what the years have brought and what taken away, and the balance of joy or suffering which remains to make life worth the living, our sharpest grief is apt to be experienced not at those unavoidable, unspeakable losses, which the death of a loved, or the dishonour of a trusted one has brought, but at the memory of the hours when our hearts failed to estimate the due worth of the affection given, or the trust reposed in us, and we swaggered carelessly along the highway of life, laughing alike at friend and foe.

Probably the bachelors have more of these old memories than perplex our Benedictine brethren. We at least have not that comfortable, consoling consciousness of civic virtue which seems to invest as with a halo of sanctity even the sorriest specimen of a lawfully-wedded man. Unable to give hostages to fortune, we must pay in our own persons the required ransom, and memory probably exacts a fuller tribute from those whose habit of life does not draw its emotional sustenance from the tranquil joys, interests, and duties of the holy estate of matrimony.

This much is at least certain, that if we may judge from physical surroundings, the bachelors have the longest memories, the most tenacious affections. Inanimate things play a greater part in their lives—at all events in their lives within doors; and while you may enter a dozen well-to-do family houses, wherein from dining-room to the connubial chamber itself, all upon which the eye rests is barren of association alike to yourself and the happy couple, we rarely find ourselves in the uncared-for rooms of Cœlebs without meeting at every turn with evidence that the poor fellow's life, perhaps because deprived of more material joys and comforts, clings with persistent, if somewhat unreasoning, fondness to such waifs and strays as recall to him the past.

Looking round his chambers thus is not alone the privilege of the happily-married friend, the anxious elder sister. Oftentimes Cœlebs takes the inspection into his own hands, and while the shadows darken over the old Inn gardens, and the firelight capriciously brightens first one and then another of his dusty, worthless household gods, his thoughts and fancies follow fondly the shifting flame, touching into the prominence of feeling the incidents and memories of the past. Such a retrospect is rarely, I think, even to the most unfortunate, wholly painful. Recollections of kindness and pity are hinted at here and there, traces of past joys, no matter how momentary in their real

endurance, linger round each cheap picture, each old-fashioned ornament or shabby *pewter*, and some record of past achievement, were it only the achievement of sacrifice, avails to soften the bitterness of long defeat. Nor for the objects with which no interests of vital nature have been bound up by that encyclopædist, Circumstance, is there wanting the quieter pleasure of memory; and as our faithful eyes turn from one to another oddly-juxtaposed possession, we live once more the full life of earlier days. We hear once more the line whistle above our heads, and the whir of the wheel in the fresh morning by the river when we caught our first salmon, and remember the almost incredulous delight of that successful shot, and the very thump with which our first *bird* struck the earth!

Here are our billiard cues, our racquets, the portrait of our first sweetheart—perhaps of our last; here the prizes we have won at school or college, the photograph of our first picture, the proofs of our first book. Here the memorials of old friends which say nothing to any hearts but our own; here the implements of our craft, whatever it may be, ready to our hand—thanks to the absence of the cleanly but irritating housemaid. Here, in short, there are, for the eyes which can read them aright, the little records of Cœlebs' life, where all upon which his eye rests has to him a significance, and is entwined with a memory.

One such bachelor dwelling-room rises before me as I write, wherein is nothing splendid, nothing specially valuable or curious, and yet which possesses in my eyes an interest beyond any that could be given by wealth or rarity. Some dark pictures, one or two with dusky golden backgrounds, by unknown painters of the early Italian school, hang upon the panelled walls; a few faded photographs stand amidst a chaos of books and papers upon a great writing-table near the window; a score of *curios*, from as many different lands, lie about on bookcase or table, or are fastened untidily upon the panelling. The bookcase is full, nay, bursting with books, papers, and MSS. of the most heterogeneous kind; the furniture is shabby and—comfortable; a brown velveteen coat hangs by the door; an atmosphere of ancient smoke and very modern dust fills the chamber; beneath the window is a green lawn, with ragged children playing under the big elm-trees whose leaves rustle against the casement. This little dwelling-place is high up, one of a score of such in an old Inn of Court, and is approached by a grimy staircase which, nobody having a special obligation to clean, never is cleaned, save when once or twice a year the Inn has a fit of housekeeping, and appears in the person of a contracting builder with a broom, a pail of whitewash, and a pot of peculiarly offensive brown paint, the only colour supposed to be known to the Benchers. Below, is a most respectable firm of solicitors; above, I suspect, a somewhat less respectable *married*

couple, the female member of which is at present steadfastly endeavouring to play "God save the Queen" with one finger on a worn-out piano. How the notes come lumbering painfully along! "God—save—our—gra—shus Queen!" That means that the time is past office hours, and the respectable firm of solicitors has closed business for the night. Ah! I thought so. The children are trooping away noisily to their teas, the old lame porter, who also acts as janitor of the gardens, hurrying up the last of them with his stick. Closing-time has come, and the warm summer night is stealing downwards through that reddish-orange mist which is the best we Londoners know of sunset. The country must be fair this evening, the flowers scentful in the warm still air! The sailors are lounging on the quays; the maids hurrying up the steep paths of the down, or along the lanes till they meet with their sweethearts; there is tennis in pleasant gardens; but as the dusk grows apace the racquets are cast down, and the antagonists saunter away beneath the trees (where the game stands at love-all), while the old people, mindful of the dew, and not wholly unmindful of the days when the dew was forgotten, turn with a half-sigh towards the house. Down the river comes a boat, the sculler scarcely breaking the still surface of the stream, so lazily he pulls. In the stern sits, let us say, his sister, her hand falling idly in the water, which ripples therefrom in long lines to right and left. There is a broken-down old barge left amongst the reeds by the bank. What are they saying, this brother and sister? That it would be well to sit there and watch the moon rise? Quick, let us come away lest we spoil the effect. After all, they may have other matters than the moon to talk of.

Yes, these summer evenings are sweet to the lads and lasses in the country now as they once were to us, and as sweet in town, in the City streets, and squares, and courts where, forgetful of the rattle of the traffic, the calling of the newsboys, the lovers meet, and meeting tell, in words or silence, their old-new story. Despite all his philosophy, an old bachelor is apt to feel a little lonely as he sits in his rooms alone, and looks back upon that far countrie, far and fair, in which he once travelled so hopefully. Especially in summer-holiday time, when all the world goes *an-Augusting*, if not a-Maying, will the aspect of his loneliness become vivid, and he will turn for consolation, as I turn to-day, to those waifs and strays which he has gathered through the past years from the wreck of many a passion, ambition, faith, and enterprise. For as the years go on all of us who are not spiritually bankrupt, turn more frequently from the contemplation of the present, and the future, to the memory of the past. As the road before us shortens, the fair perspectives of the dead years lengthen, and shine with a gentler radiance, for, towards sundown, we all wend eastwards and see but a reflected light.

Even for those exceptionally happy persons, the very-much-married men, whose interests for the future are multiplied by the presence of a numerous and exigent offspring, there must come moments, not of regret—forbid it, Hymen!—but of tolerant remembrance of some youthful moments which would hardly be strictly in unison with their present irreproachable domestic felicity, and which they would scarcely care to discuss with Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi. For myself, I am free to confess that, speaking as an erring and errant man, as yet unbound in the sheaves of wedlock, I find my memory-pleasures less remunerative with regard to the many occasions on which I behaved with unblemished and immaculate propriety, than when I consider those upon which my Mrs. Grundean 'friends' relatives shook their heads with reprobation.

The hot fit and the cold fit of love; the recklessness, failure, and success of unconventional action; the days when I did *not* work, but lay fooling under the trees with pipe or sweetheart; the answer which did certainly *not* turn away wrath; the hours after midnight which were *not* in bed; the hours at midday which—were; the suppers, *not* of lentils, and the liquids, which both cheered and inebriated; the first dash at Monte Carlo, and that beastly day when I saw Stirling beaten by a short head at Newmarket; and quaint experiences in China and Japan, Egypt and India, which I hoped, and certainly ought, to have long since forgotten: these are the memories of which the guardians stand beside my chair whilst I smoke the pipe of contemplation. After all they were not very hurtful save to their owner, these blind loves, aimless wanderings, wasted hours, and occasional frailties; and if I recall the least estimable of them with great satisfaction, no doubt the reason is because I have not yet reached that perfect state of life in which cakes and ale have entirely lost their attractiveness. At all events, once more, all friends and brother-sinners, let us look back at the eventful days!

Come, dearest friend of my youth, whose love-affairs were only less dear to me than my own, and who now are soldiering, with more or less ineffectiveness, amongst pig-tailed Chinamen, and you, old college chum, the best and least expansive of friends, who to-day teach something of the mysteries of conveyancing to Melbourne litigants, and even you, gentle counsellor of my early manhood, whose bright spirit deserved a better fate than the dull, but gentlemanly husband and ineffective progeny whom providence assigned you. Come, one or all of you, this evening to these lonely rooms, and bear me company. Let us chat together once more in spirit, as we shall never do in life, and look forth from the safe harbour of age, over those restless seas, long withdrawn, the thunder of whose surf is still sounding in our ears.

You too, fellow-bachelors, bound only to me by the tie of a common misfortune—you, too, shall be welcome here to-night, and shall hear your own stories told, with but little difference, in listening to ours. For your experience or mine, or Jones's round the corner, what matters it? Are not the essentials of all experience and life much the same, though the accidents vary eternally?

What is it our most picturesque historian said in that book of which he is now so needlessly ashamed? *A full-bounding exultant youth, a strong vigorous manhood, a decline which refuses to believe it is a decline, and a deathbed made beautiful by the abiding love of a few true-hearted friends,*¹ such is the eternal course of nature through the history of men, of nations, of creeds. Or, to strike a somewhat different note, hear the view upon this question of the most genial philosopher of to-day. "Childhood must pass away, and then youth, as surely as age approaches. The true wisdom is to be always seasonable; and to change with a good grace in changing circumstances. To love playthings well as a child, to lead an adventurous and honourable youth, and to settle when the time arrives into a green and smiling age, is to be a good artist in life and deserve well of yourself and your neighbour." It is even so, you have reasoned well, O pleasantest of special pleaders, who, true to your own idling and adventurous theories, are now loitering on your yacht's careless wings amidst the islands of the Southern Sea. We must be young before we can be old, and the younger we have been, all the preachers notwithstanding, the more fruitful will be our age. The follies and even the peccadilloes of youth are but as the little green buds which drop from the apple-trees in such profusion in an abundant year—signs of the rich growth within, and their fall does but leave the way clear for the future, and finer, fruit. Hundreds if not thousands of these immature frailties the new brooms of experience must sweep away into memory's dust-bin; we forget alike the joy and sorrow of the years. Yet, they have had their use in making us what we are. Here and there still, however, certain events stand out capriciously, and of these our first love is apt to be the chief.

How well I remember her! She was good-natured, tall, and fair, with a rosy colour and the promise of a nutcracker chin, and she spoke with a sharp snapping accent, which reduced all her words as it were to the lowest common denominator, and gave no quarter to redundant syllables. And it is horrible to think how conventional it sounds—she was five-and-twenty, and I fifteen. She—even at this distance of time I have not the heart to call her

¹ For this, and all other possibly incorrect quotations, kind readers, pardon! these proofs have come to me staying in a village by the western sea, where the nearest approach to the *Nemesis of Life* is the local paper.—*Cælebs*.

by a false name—was one of a large family of girls who lived with their father in a dull old-fashioned house with a large garden, in a western suburb of London. The mother had even then been dead for some years, and the father, who was a man of peculiar ideas, used to train his dogs and his children with the same severity. Perhaps he was making fun of me, but I believe it was in all seriousness that he showed me a bundle of canes in a corner of the dining-room, and explained that it was with those that he—but no, the recollection is too painful! I looked at the little dried-up chip of a man, with his eyes twinkling maliciously, and thought of an overruling providence. Anyhow, the girls were in deadly awe of the little old gentleman, and used to scurry out of his presence into the garden as soon as possible after dinner. There in that garden I told my love, under an elm-tree. I had induced her to sit down—she was much taller than I—and there, borrowing her parasol, I wrote in the dust: I love you! I remember thinking with some pride that evening, at my private tutor's, of the ingenuity of this declaration. For previous attempts had been made to get this important confession *out*, and it wouldn't come. The parasol, *deus ex machinâ*, settled it; she only laughed and blushed, but I thought she was profoundly moved, and soon after, hugely content with myself, I went back to my tutor's. Thence on every possible occasion I would make my way to my sweetheart's house—it was early autumn, I remember, and the train and a fourpenny 'bus were the humble conveyances which my financial condition rendered advisable—and then I would ask if Miss ——— was at home, and be ushered into the drawing-room solemnly—a horrible room, though I did not think so then, with heavy early Georgian furniture, large and execrable oil-pictures, and plenty of tapestry-woolwork, Dresden china and skeleton leaves, and white and green ivory chessmen under glass shades, etc. And then she would float in, smiling divinely—she always floated and smiled, and had generally an appearance as if some strong unseen wind, Zephyr, of course, was blowing her curls and ribbons about; a jealous friend I remember alluded to her once in my hearing as seven-stringed Jack, a low and opprobrious title which was washed out in blood—from his nose. But this by the way. In she would come, and I would sit on the edge of my chair, and make desperate efforts to inveigle her into the garden, feeling there always much more at my ease, partly because of my elm-tree triumph. After some delay, she would generally come, and there, behind one of the forcing-pits, I on a halcyon afternoon kissed her solemnly, and felt that she was mine. Oh, the bliss of that first kiss! I wonder now what she thought of it all. I was tremendously in earnest, and used to quote poetry, and write letters a yard long, and generally must have made a gorgeous and amusing ass of myself. About this period I bought



LE RÊVE.— A. DE RICHEMONT

her a ring, and having once kissed her, made a point of keeping up the practice—I recollect thinking with surprise how easy a thing is when you've done it once. Nothing, however, in this world is perfect, and this memory is darkened by two horrible incidents which occurred towards the close of our *engagement*. After one of those innocent debauches amongst the forcing-pits above mentioned, I was asked to stay dinner—I always made a point of staying if I could—but this time I was invited formally, and regretted it. For old Mr.—Jones, let me call him—whether by thoughtlessness or wishing to be well rid of me, made me as gloriously tipsy as a boy of fifteen could very well be. I drank whatever was put before me, and trying to remember afterwards what it had been, recollected sherry and champagne and beer, and a peculiarly old and fruity port, upon which Jones especially prided himself, and which he always insisted on having decanted by his eldest daughter. Fired by these generous liquids I overstayed my time, and the 'bus which left at 10.45 had started when I reached the inn. Of course I had no money, and—worse—far worse—the air had revealed to me that I was remarkably unsteady upon my legs. Taking both sides of the road at once, somehow I got back to the house, and mysteriously borrowed five shillings of the butler, who I thought regarded me with criticism not unmingled with approval—with which I took a cab, and just caught the last train. I was not well—not at all well—in the cab, and the cabman was—not polite—but I was much too far gone to care for that. Being, however, a few minutes too soon for the last train, I walked up and down, up and down the platform, trying after the straight line. At last I reached my destination—my tutor's house was black, the gate locked, and I rang despairingly. After some minutes a noise—the door was first half-opened on the chain, then entirely, and my tutor's wife, in all the simplicity of her night garments, and with her always awful politeness in full working order, wished me good evening. Good evening! O the irony of those simple words! I dared not speak; I dared not stay. Like a guilty thing—the phraseology is conventional but appropriate—I fled to my cubicle, and there slowly and sadly I laid me down without further ceremony of undressing, and there in the morning, a prey alike to love and liquor, my companions found me asleep—in my boots!

An awful incident; is it not? degrading in its foolishness and error; and yet when I think of those rides on the omnibus, those autumn walks of ours in the garden, those kisses behind the forcing-pit—What say you, my invisible friends, were such things not good as a relief to *propria quæ maribus*, and that exuberant *horse* who was for ever careering through green fields?

The end was not far off. She came to stop with us. I thought

her demeanour a little constrained, but did not suspect the awful truth for some days. Then—one evening by the fire when my sister left the room—she told me. Of course the old story. I think I could have borne it if he had not had whiskers! (People loved whiskers in those days, and men were openly proud of them!) Those whiskers sat heavy on my heart, they were bushy and strong; he was—no matter. I wrote her a letter—of burning sarcasm: I trusted—the usual thing: I promised in the when other lips and other hearts-style that I would shield and defend her ever, and so we parted; and the little ring—oh, bathos!—was sent back to my sister, who put it in a drawer and lost it. I fancy one of the chambermaids had a hand in that loss! And the worst of it was that *She* never wanted shielding or defending at all. He didn't turn out to be a brute, or anything but a very good fellow. They live still placidly and happily enough, with plenty of olive-branches and money; he is bald and grey, and she—stout. And she still snaps her syllables as of old, but the Venus air has somehow departed. I wonder if she ever thinks of the boy-lover she treated so—was it badly? No, I think it was kindly. She was good to me, and let me dream. I believe in her heart she liked me well enough; but this is a practical age, and, as an old servant said to me about this time, “A woman of five-and-twenty and a boy of fifteen, why, it's ridiklus—that's what it is!”

Let us leave such old-world memories, remembering that this is holiday time, when all the world is rushing forwards, Cook juvante, to sea or mountain, casino or bath, or where the foreign papa plays tambourine and shuttle-ball¹ on the Digue with shrill cries of pleasure. We, too, have travelled in our time, witness those Australian boomerangs which we never learned to throw, and those lumps of coral from the Fijis, which we spent many a long morning at sea trying to polish. Here, too, is a relic of the vagabond days, an anomalous beast, half elephant, half camel, carved in a greenish-white stone. He is worth looking at, though his tail does end in a great flowery scroll, and though lesser scrolls come from his mouth instead of tusks, and meander aimlessly around his body. I remember well the day he was bought. I had come up the Canton river—the name always escapes me—and settled down disgustedly in a horrible little hotel, for Archdeacon G——y, universal Amphitryon, was away, and I knew no one else in the city. And at the hotel two jade merchants, on the look-out for the “foreign devil,” beset me, and sold me—at an exorbitant price, as I afterwards discovered—several of their wares, and told me all sorts of cheerful intelligence.

¹ I never could remember the name of this pastime, but it has a refreshingly innocent and simple character as played by two or three stout Belgian papas and mammas, who toss the ball from one to another with gambols and shrill whoops of delight.—*Cælebs*.

A woman (she had killed her husband after betraying him) was to be cut in pieces (a regular and peculiarly horrible judicial punishment in China) that morning, and my commercial friends were very anxious I should not miss the opportunity, and exhausted themselves in description of the details of the execution. I went for a walk instead, up that extraordinary Canton High Street, which still seems to me the most wonderful business alley of the world, with the swarming population, the deafening music-rooms, the long narrow crimson and scarlet banners covered with quaint vertical inscriptions in golden hieroglyphics, the strange wares, animate and inanimate; and, what impressed me most of all, the butchers' shops, where the little fat white dogs hung head downwards, looking like idealised sucking-pigs.

That bit of jade has seen some queer things since then, and lived in five different houses ere finally returning. There are things of which no man can get rid, try as he will, and this is one of them. One halcyon day I thought my elephant-camel and I were indeed two, for I persuaded a relation, who must have been temporarily deranged, to give me ten pounds for him; but his *possession* was only for a short time. I never knew whether it was his wife who refused to have the ugly thing in the house; but in any case he brought the green brute back; and from that day to this I have made no attempt to get rid of him. Nay, even a spurious attachment has sprung up between us, and I have discovered that he possesses negative merits of remarkable extent. He is phenomenally unsteady, for instance, and far too top-heavy for his minute ebony stand, and he is unbreakable! Moreover, if he falls upon anything he destroys that object utterly. I view him now, mainly as a curious example of the height to which the love of buying useless things can be pushed, and I remember penitently that from that first trip of mine in the East I sent home large cases from every available port, filled with such idiotic purchases. Most of these, however, I sold at Christie's many years ago, where they realised to my surprise about half what I had paid for them in the East. A relation, however, who advised me not to attend the sale, bought a large number, and was, I believe, satisfied. Jade has this special attraction to an ignorant purchaser, that it is almost impossible to tell the good from the bad, the real from the imitation, without a great deal of experience.

Yes, that is a pretty frame. I bought it at Delhi in '74; there was a miniature in it then of the Tâj, and an old Parsee sold it to me in the verandah of the hotel. Carved ebony and silver as you see. Look at the delicate convolutions of the pattern, copied from the Italian ornament on the Tâj itself!

And the portrait! You think it pretty? You think you've seen the face before—in the photograph-shops? Possibly, my Achates. Yet few portraits so expensive as this, are purchased and paid for. What visions, what regrets, do not rise before me as I look through the thin clouds of my cigar smoke at this, the one ornament of my writing-table! A girl's profile exquisitely delicate in every line, heavy masses of hair brought low down upon the forehead, the head set finely upon a slender rounded neck, some stage pearls and a morsel of a white dress!

Yes, she was beautiful, and very brave, and would, I used to think, have made a typical Queen of Beauty in old days. She would have smiled upon the victor, who, as Lawrence once put it, "came a-wooing with the blood of last night's favourite still red upon his sword." For there was something of pitilessness in her, potent and ineradicable. Always in her nature were fighting the elements of truth and falsehood, and the long struggle between feeling and pretence took, perhaps, lasting shape from the theatrical surroundings of her life. Hers was one of those natures in which vanity, when once permitted to take root, quickly overshadows all the other qualities; from the first moment that the world recognised her as *a beauty* the result was inevitable. That most damnable fashion of the day, which sets the photographs of beautiful girls in every shop-window, has much to answer for, and the effect of the society paper paragraphs is perhaps more injurious still to the modesty and true dignity of maidenhood. Poor Amy, she might have been a happy woman had it not been for her one besetting foible of vanity. Under its influence I lived to see her face gradually growing harder and harder, till at last all the photographer's cunning could not conceal the cold brilliant stare of the eyes, or the hardening of the delicate curves of the lips. All that is long ago; the photograph, you will see, is faded, but the beautiful Miss —— is the beautiful Miss —— still. We were good friends, nothing more, but I once met the man she loved (or at least the man who thought that she loved him), who was engaged to her, and whom she threw over three weeks before her marriage was to take place, without hesitation or excuse. He seemed a queer fellow, but there was something to be said for his point of view. "I did not mind her throwing me over," he said, "so much, though it's always ——unpleasant, you know, that sort of thing; but I did mind her having sent me with the other Johnnie's stick." This was sufficiently ambiguous; but I discovered on interrogation that the man for whom my acquaintance had been jilted had shortly before left his stick at the beauty's house, and with a refinement of ingenuity she had sent it back to the club by the hands of her *fiancé*, just before breaking off the engagement! I sympathised with my "Johnnie" after that, and when he had further been comforted by a whisky and Apollinaris he

departed, grumbling. What would have happened had they married, I wonder? Perhaps the "other Johnnie's stick" would have appeared all the same; perhaps, with that wonderful change which turns reckless girls and men oftentimes into good husbands and wives, they might even now be jogging along happily together. My friend was, I fancy, capable of something more than the Club and whisky and Apollinaris; and she—well, it is a poor reward for courage, purity, and beauty if they can gain no joy or reward for their possessor beyond a flush of gratified vanity from the paragraphs in the *Fashionable Intelligence*!

One of those two oil sketches has a little history. The scene is, as you may see, a shipwreck; the fisher-people have rushed out to see the vessel drift past. This was an actual experience. A howling gale was blowing one Sunday morning, and, driven indoors by stress of weather and the impossibility of keeping an easel up in face of such a gale, I was making a study of the waves from the inn window, when suddenly the wreck drifted in sight, the fishermen and their wives rushed out, and the picture made itself without any thought or care on the part of the artist. How well the evening of that day comes back! It was late autumn, and there were four of us; two of either sex. The women were staying at the inn, my friend and myself in lodgings at the little village. We were, at all events for that time, in a happy state of respectable Bohemianism. In the daytime we painted; in the evening there was good music from one of the women, and the rest of us talked, and designed, and wrote villainous sonnets, and were generally, but cheerfully, æsthetic.

How Mrs. Grundy would have stared and lifted her hands in horror, for relationship, even of the most distant cousinly kind, there was none between us, and we were not even in love with one another; simply four *good comrades*, of whom two happened to be women.

Another memorial of that day hangs upon that wall in the shape of a brace of queer designs very beautifully embroidered in coloured silk on white cloth. On one of them a peacock, at least a couple of inches high, gorgeous with outspread tail, and surrounded with a trelliswork of vines heavy with clusters of purple grapes, stands above the legend *Quand même*, the significance of which is not immediately apparent. And on the other is wrought in profusion of delicate detail a flower-grown field by the sea, beyond which one delicate thread of white silk marks the boundary of the chalk cliff, and over a line of blue water hangs, in a morsel of *filoselle*, the crescent moon. For we had been chaffing about women and men, and their respective work, and some had scoffed specially at needlework, and its incapacity with regard to drawing, whereupon one said, "I don't think you could

draw anything which we could not work," and so I scribbled three designs as a challenge, lying on the sofa the while, while my friend made a study of the needlewoman's head, and her May, who had a genius for playing Chopin, drifted on from one nocturne to another, quietly; tenderly. How long ago it all seems! How utterly impossible that quartette should ever sit, and work, and play together again! To quote Owen Meredith, "Since then, what is it we have won" but the knowledge that such repetition is impossible? Is not all repetition impossible? On life's road as on the track to the lion's cave—*Vestigia nulla retrorsum*. To attempt to re-enact such an experience is to destroy even its memory; to reduce to everyday prose, an incident which, through some subtle touch of sympathy or circumstance, was in its way perfect—perfect in unreserve, in given and merited trust, in frank enjoyment of one another's society, in the practice of what artistic faculty we could boast, for the simple pleasure of doing the work. The shabby low-ceilinged inn parlour rises again before me, with May turning round from the piano. "Does it sound—*very* awful?" and the ruddy gold of the lamplight in Ethel's hair, and the uncleared-away remains of the composite meal, in which beer and tea, salad and prawns, cold beef and cherries, had all borne a part. Ah, well! one of us is married since then, and one is—not; and with the others Time has dealt after his usual fashion, diapering the light and shadow from year to year.

And here, too, is one of my chief treasures; an old altar-piece perhaps by Guido of Sienna; at all events, by some good painter of his time and school; a picture on whose genuineness even the experts throw no doubt. No one who has not lived with them can know the charm of these pre-Raphaelite pictures, and no one who has lived with them, I think, can tell you exactly wherein the charm consists. One is tempted to say that the sincerity of feeling is in such work the chief source of attractiveness. I cannot see why other styles of painting are less sincere—styles from which the charm of which we are speaking is undeniably absent. Strangely as it may sound to the ears of modern æsthetic readers, it is after all probable that much of the secret of these pictures lies in their subject, in

"The old series, Virgin, babe, and saint,"

and that they appeal to us in our deeper moods mainly because they touch, even in their faultiest representation, those deeper springs of feeling which have been the long-enduring possession of mankind. For though religions change, though they rise, flourish, and decay, the religious sentiment itself is permanent; and feeling it as we all do, in some shape or another, in our most thoughtful hours, we like to have, and find in accordance with our own feeling, the silent evidence which these pictures give us, that earlier genera-



LA MARCHESA

SIR FREDERICK BURTON

From the original water colour in possession of the author
(*President of the National Gallery*)

tions felt the same. Such pictures—where the religion has been, above all, the motive of the painting, where it has dominated the expression of the artist's thought, and restrained the exercise of his genius within certain lines—are no doubt frequently imperfect in their expression of the painter's genius ; but, on the other hand, much errant, uncertain, and imperfect art was by this sentiment refined and sobered, was educated, so to speak, out of its eccentricities and, intellectually speaking, its aberration. I fancy this is why almost all the pictures of a certain period are good to live with, not of course good in the same degree, but good in the sense of not growing stale, not jarring upon us when we have exhausted their superficial attractions. There is nothing easier than to laugh at the almond-shaped eyes, the long boneless hands, the wooden limbs and bodies, the dislocated necks and conventional surroundings which we find in paintings of the Siennese, and other early Italian schools, but such laughter is not an explanation of the fact that such pictures do possess in a special degree the quality of harmony with their surroundings, so long as those surroundings are unmeretricious, and untheatrical.

Here is another face which the world would call fair, if only for its colouring, and the depth and softness of the eyes, which recalls to me another aspect of the river. Every Londoner will know one day, and a few of us know now, how rarely beautiful at night is that long curve of the Embankment which stretches from Westminster to Waterloo Bridge ; and here a man whom I knew used to meet his sweetheart "after the show." She was only a chorus-girl, he told me, rather prettier than the rest, and did actually, what so many do in theory, keep her relations on her slender salary, and disliking the crowd and loungers of the Strand, would, whenever the night was fine, walk down to Westminster. There one night I saw them, walking swiftly hand in hand, she all in black, with a thick veil, talking eagerly. The electric lights of the Embankment and Waterloo Bridge cast long lines of brightness on the water ; the lights of the cabs and omnibuses could just be seen above the parapet of the bridge, and beneath the great arches looked dark and heavy ; and on all the long pavement were only those two figures ! They passed without heeding me, where I stood in the shadow of the great bronze sphinxes which guard Cleopatra's Needle, and so away to the lighted tower of Westminster. The clock struck midnight, and I listened while the reverberations of the last stroke seemed to sink into the ripple of the river, and float away seaward—when I turned—the street was empty. Not long afterwards they were parted : he gave me that photograph. Why, you may guess ; for every now and then he will come and chat here, and smoke, and talk of all subjects but one, again and again his eyes will turn, as it were, unconsciously, to where it stands. How it happened, and whose was

the fault, whose (perhaps) the sin, I never asked. Men, you know, do not ask these things of one another, but I never see him sitting there, bright, prosaic, and apparently commonplace, without thinking of that windy autumn evening, of her eager voice, his bent-down head, of the hand firmly clasped in hand. I do not fancy he was bad to her, I hardly think she was false to him. I fancy rather "domestic necessity in the shape of relations," as George Eliot puts it, came between them, and made this, too, an unfinished love story.

What shall be said of my one extravagance in pottery, this Majolica plate whose shifting lustre brightens the dark corner of the room? The colour of the groundwork is blue, shaded with white, and the whole design is painted thereon in a deep rich yellow, on which the red, blue, and purple reflections of the lustre shine splendidly; indeed, in some lights the glaze of the dish seems to hold an imprisoned rainbow, and whatever quarrel the beautiful Sebastiana, whose portrait occupies the middle of the dish, may have had with the artist who gave her so much forehead and so little chin, she certainly cannot reproach him with the rest of the design, for a more beautiful piece of simple decoration is rarely seen. And it is especially worth noting to those who are believers in what may be called the South Kensington style of decoration, that the design here pleases as much by its freedom as by its ingenuity and repetition. There are no two parts of this plate which exactly echo one another, but everywhere we can trace that likeness in unlikeness, that frequent and, so to speak, irresponsible variation of the pattern, which shows that the artist who executed the work was in all human probability the artist who invented the design, and that he allowed his hand and mind perfect freedom to make what variation he pleased as the plate proceeded.

And lastly, will you look with me at this shabby little black frame enclosing a pencil sketch, done in a half-hearted, pre-Raphaelite manner, of some reeds, and a broad stretch of river bounded by an elm-shaded towing-path? Midway there stands an old inn, with landing-stage for the ferry, and beyond, the long wall of a park. Half a score such scenes may be found between Putney and Oxford *on the river*, as rowing-men are apt to call the hundred miles or so of stream so dear to them, for the love of the Thames is almost personal in its intensity and character; no other stream is ever quite the same to our "watermen;" no other is ever called simply *the river*. Mark, that for real Thames lovers there is not even an emphasis on the *the*—other streams are forgotten, non-existent. Many a year before this drawing was done I had sculled past the spot, little thinking I should ever stay there, for nothing invited even the most *irresponsible reviewer*. One summer, however, found me in a cottage almost within a stone's-throw of the old inn,

and nearer to our watery highway, a girl I cared for, lived with her people. It was a perfect summer—perfect in weather, with bright sunshine and warm showers, and fresh cool breezes blowing over the flower-laden, sweet-scented fields. I had paddled up a decent boat from “Messenger’s”—is that deaf waterman, with the rolling eyes and humorous thirsty mouth, still there, I wonder?—and all day, till late afternoon, we paddled about, or rested in the friendly back waters, or drifted down stream idly. How the scenes rise! The lingering mist in the grey early morning, and the icy coolness of the water by the island from which I used to bathe, the quiet pull back to breakfast—not at my cottage—the cool dresses of the women—she generally wore her straw hat with a spotted blue ribbon in it at breakfast so as to be ready for the boat—the long-legged brother who came down to see us off, but who was allowed to come no farther; the mother’s gentle insinuations that it would be as well to turn up at the midday meal; our impatience to be off; the *rest* which came when the first dip of the sculls took us fairly out into the stream! Summer can be very pleasant, and it was very pleasant then.

Was it all a dream? Did these things ever happen? Did this woman love me then? Did I love her? Is it nothing but a vision of the Inn? Who shall say? Yet do I not hear her voice now, at the time I thought there was an ominous foreboding in its accent, “Have you had a pleasant time?” and I said *Pleasant!* That was the day before the summer ended, and in the evening we sculled a friend who had been down for Sunday to —— to catch the 10.30 express. I remember he nearly drowned us, by the way, first by insisting on sculling, then by steering us into every object, stationary or locomotive, he could see, or couldn’t see, for the night was dark then, and he was shortsighted. At last, in terror lest he should miss his train and have to be taken back, we persuaded him to be quiet in the bows. We lost some time changing, a ticklish operation in our skiff, and the train-time was not far off when I, to use an old boating phrase, “laid down to my work.” In those days I could still scull a bit, and was, at all events, in hard training. The swish of the boat through the dark water; the dim silhouette of the girl before me; the freshening coolness of the night spreading its dark wings round us; the sulky silence of my friend in the bows; the excitement of the race against time and darkness; the thought of the paddle back when the moon would be up and the river quiet; the camp-fires on the bank; the black silence of the open locks—all sights, and sounds, and thoughts were good that night. So we raced down the stream, silent by mutual if unspoken consent, till, at last—the indistinct outlines of a bridge and church tower, and, farther off, the signal lights of the railway, grew out of the shadows.

We landed him—a good fellow anywhere but in a boat. I hope

he will forgive me if he ever sees these lines. We turned the skiff's nose homeward; my companion would pull, "to rest me," she said, putting her hand on my shoulder as she stepped lightly into the boat, and so we started. It was growing late, the campers-out had finished supper, and as we passed the first lock (where I took the sculls) the moon rose. The stream glowed blue silver between the shadows of the bank. There were scattered lights in the tents, and as we passed up the stream Helen began to sing, and from the shore the men's voices took up the burden, and as we swept gently beyond each camp, *good-night* and answering *good-night* went to and fro between the singer and the chorus. What hour was it when I drove the boat into the thick bank of reed from which my sketch was afterwards taken? How long did the quiet summer night look down upon us there? Who knows? It was so long ago! We were very foolish, but very happy, and if we thought that the reeds, and the river, and the little wandering breezes whispered of a future, fairer even than that present, well, others have had similar fruitless fancies. Exquisite moments are, Mr. Pater tells us, the only things worth living for, and even in that very hour I told myself that no fruition of love could be more exquisite than this promise—never to be fulfilled.

So, as the shadows deepen, the memories come and go—the memories of the long past days, and in vain we strive to stay their fleeting presence, and vainly think—If we could but have those days again! If the clock would but *for once* run backward, then should we not be blest indeed? But, it may be otherwise. Perhaps only loss gives the true sweetness to possession, perhaps only change makes so dear that which we have left. Could we look forward, as we look back, and with equal knowledge, might we not envy our present secure seat in life, our thronged consciousness, nay even those regrets in which so much of the past fondly lingers, which, let us hope, make our actions kindlier, our hearts less rudely selfish than in the old blossoming time? For, rightly or wrongly, we have now gathered the fruit of life; we have lived, we *know*. And if the experience has brought us sorrow, has it not also brought us some touch of that happiness which is akin to sorrow, nay, which is only possible to those who have suffered, perchance even to those who have sinned? For while the world spins round in its accustomed way, and men and women are born wingless and imperfect, so long will the best wisdom be bought with pain, and the best happiness be that which has so well been said to be only distinguishable from grief "because it is that which our souls would choose, because we see that it is good."

Nor would I have even the most hurried reader imagine that the

present writer would preach in any sense the superiority of the single life, or exalt the delights of irresponsibility and change, at the expense of the less exciting duties and affections of the wedded state. When all is said and done there must always lie in wait for the bachelor that worst of punishments, isolation. Sooner or later his friends die, change to him, marry, or pass away into other lands and are occupied with other interests. One by one his intimates are gone from club or college, on 'Change or racecourse, amongst the stubbles or on the moor; his young relations grow up, and he becomes to them a fogey, and whilst the married man lives again, more secure in the happiness of his children than he ever was in that of his own youth, the bachelor grows older at the sight, and loses touch with citizenship. He becomes an anachronism, and has either to make a poor, imitation, cuckoo-like home for himself in a friend's household, or harden into the confirmed club or society man, a living protest against society. Better perhaps any shipwreck than this abandonment of enterprise, any action than this selfish quiet, any worries, exertion, and disappointments of real life, than this fruitless dwelling amidst the memories of the vanished years.

IN MEMORIAM: FRANK HOLL.¹



WITHIN the last twenty years the best of the younger generation of our artists have died before their prime, and by the death of Mr. Frank Holl another name has been added to the already long list. Let us think for a moment of those who have thus been taken from us, ere speaking of the latest loss.

First there comes to mind the name of George Mason, the lover of English landscape and English children, the exquisite colourist, the keen disciple of simple beauty, the painter of "The Evening Hymn" and "The Harvest Moon." His was a strange life, artistically, for during some years he showed little trace of his characteristic genius, and painted in Italy the most ordinary pictures of Campagna peasant life. He was nearly starving, I have been told, when Signor Costa² found him and took him into his Roman studio, and there and thence, strange as it may sound, Mason learnt—poetry!—learnt from this grave, fastidious, thoughtful Italian, the beauty of sentiment, the delicacy of hand, the pure classical grace of line which he was subsequently to develop beyond his master's capacity, and under our northern skies.

I like to think that the one thing wanting to Costa's minute, graceful and elaborate art, the sentiment of humanity, the connection of the artistic beauty represented with the every-day feelings and actions of men, is just what Mason gained when he left that Italian studio and turned for his subjects to the children whom he found playing in English meadows, to the lovers whom he watched

¹ This article was written in haste within a few days of Frank Holl's death. I have thought it better to let it appear here without alteration, as unless I re-wrote the paper altogether I could not remove its mark of a special occasion.

² He exhibits in England still, and is not yet an old man.



Imp. DUBOIS ET LESIEUX, PARIS

FRANK HOLL : A SKETCH FROM LIFE

RENOUARD

whispering in English lanes, to the reapers faring homewards under the harvest moon, or the village girls singing in the twilight. For a very few brief years Mason painted such pictures, and then, in the prime of his art, died suddenly—an unparalleled loss to English art. He left alive, however, in early manhood, two men who might to some extent have carried on his art, or rather his character of subject and the spirit in which he had treated it, and these were Fred Walker and George Pinwell; two names that should never be disassociated. Friends in life and companions in death, there was also in their art strange like-and-unlikeness; they worked towards the same end from different points of view.

George Pinwell was a painter whose work was never fully appreciated during his lifetime, and is even now almost unknown to the general public. But he was an artist of the rarest quality, with a mind full of strange fancies, and a technical power of expressing these in delicate and vivid colour which has rarely been rivalled. He either learnt from Walker, or learnt with Walker, that curious water-colour method, "half wash, quarter fresco," as Ruskin once described it, which the latter painter carried to such perfection; but he never quite mastered the mechanical difficulties of his art, and he was but just feeling his way towards painting in oils when he died. Yet with all his technical deficiencies the sentiment of beauty was even stronger in Pinwell than in the painter of the "Ploughing" and the "Old Gate." At least, it was stronger for all imaginative work, and the character of his pictures owed less to the artists of former times, for the grace of Fred Walker's ploughman and labourers was adopted; it is impossible to deny, from classic art. The very horses in the "Ploughing," for instance, might have stepped down from the frieze of the Parthenon. But in Pinwell's best work, such for instance as "The Elixir of Love," "The Earl O'Quarterdeck," "The Saracen Maiden entering London," etc., it is most difficult to trace the source from which the artist derived his inspiration. And there is, moreover, in these works a curious strain of morbid feeling from which Walker was entirely free; but on these points I must not here dwell. It is only necessary to say, whatever may have been the contrast between the imaginative beauty of Pinwell's work and the realistic beauty of Walker, that both were artists of the rarest capacity, who dealt in the main with English contemporary subjects, and succeeded in manifesting the poetry and the artistic opportunities of every-day modern life. When these men died (Walker was thirty-three, Pinwell thirty-four) they left a blank which our art has as yet been unable to fill. No English painter of to-day carries on worthily their idyllic tradition. Moreover, it is worthy of notice that the direction which painting has taken since their death—the direction, namely, of imitation of the French school—is manifestly opposite in tendency to the whole spirit of Walker

and Pinwell's painting, which was in its essentials of Italian (and pre-Raphaelite Italian too) descent, and which above all things was founded upon colour instead of being founded upon "value."

About the same time that Pinwell and Walker died, there died, too, another man whose art might possibly have rivalled theirs had its possessor lived. Boyd Houghton was one of those designers of whom the world knows but little, but who are greatly esteemed by their artistic contemporaries. His work, chiefly consisting of designs for woodcuts, has very rare imaginative qualities, his originality, and occasionally his power, are extraordinary; but there was a lack of sanity in the man's life, and to some extent this was reflected in his art. With him, too, one thinks of Valentine Bromley, also an original worker who never lived "to beat his music out." All of these were figure-painters, at least chiefly; but the list would not be complete without the mention of the only great landscape-artist who belonged to the same generation—Cecil Lawson. He, too, was scarcely recognised before he died; and it only seems yesterday that the world was talking about his first great landscape at the Grosvenor Gallery, and discussing why the Royal Academy had always rejected him. He, too, was in sympathy with the idyllic school: his landscapes were in some sense "short stories." An intention ran through the work: a hint of meaning as well as of beauty. A bit of nature, yes, but a bit of man too—that was the subject-matter of his pictures as it has been the subject-matter of all really great landscape-art.

And now, but slightly older than these men I have mentioned, but with a fuller record and infinitely better known to the public, Mr. Frank Holl has "joined the majority," and left a gap in the ranks of our portrait-painters which will be difficult to fill.

Holl was when he died beyond all comparison the most popular of our living portrait-painters: this may be confidently stated, without even making the exception in favour of Sir John Millais, whose work in this department of art, though possessed at its best of finer qualities of painting and colour than are to be found in any of Frank Holl's pictures, has been of late years so unequal, and frequently so perfunctory in its execution, that it is little more than an even chance whether any given example will be a success or failure. This uncertainty is rarely felt with regard to a portrait by Frank Holl. No doubt some of his likenesses are more successful than others; some of his sitters necessarily gave him fuller opportunities, or excited in him a greater sympathy. But in each case, almost (as far as I can remember) without exception, the portraits produced were sound sterling pieces of work, executed throughout with the painter's utmost skill and care. Indeed, few artists living or dead could be cited

whose pictures are so level in quality, and have such a thorough workmanlike aspect, touching manufacture in its uniformity, and yet entirely free from dulness or conventionality. I have said in another place that this artist threw, to some extent, the cloak of his own personality over all his sitters, but the transformation he effected was consistent with a most vivid and faithful rendering of his subject—a life-likeness, so to speak, which combined the vivacity and emotion of life with an almost photographic accuracy of detail. Every one who has studied Mr. Holl's art will admit the truth that he was at once the most accurate and literal, and the most prejudiced (not in a bad sense) and ideal of portrait-makers; that he had two moods, in one of which he grasped thoroughly every characteristic of the subject before him, and another in which he let himself go, and brought his picture into accordance with his personal sentiment.

This is not the place to enter upon a lengthy technical criticism, but it is perhaps permissible to point out that, in respect of his flesh-painting and the general colour quality of his pictures, Holl was more allied to the French than the English school. There is, in truth, a considerable likeness in many of his portraits to those of Carolus Duran, and there is something, too, of the same swift, certain execution, just on the good side of sketchiness, that is to be found in the work of the great French master. The one colour which he loved above all others, and which forms the keynote of almost every picture of his which I remember, was black,¹ and his dexterity in the management of this tint was extraordinary. There is an often-quoted remark amongst artists that you may tell a colourist by the manner in which he treats black, *i.e.* by the amount of colour he gets into it. And if this be true, Frank Holl's claims to be considered a colourist are indisputable, though we must admit that he was a colourist in a peculiar fashion, finding his greatest successes in a very restricted scheme of tint. It is rash to prophesy, but future years will, I think, bring the judgment that the great deficiency of his portraits is to be found in the character of the flesh-painting, in a certain opacity and paintiness of texture which bears little resemblance to the transparency and brilliancy of life. I think his too great devotion to a sharply effective style of chiaroscuro is in great measure answerable for this, and his exclusive preference for black may perhaps be traced to the same source. But to whatever cause the effect may be due there seems to me no doubt that the deficiency is a real one; we do not feel that the blood is pulsating beneath the skin, that the flesh will bleed if it be pricked—that, in fact, it is flesh, not paint, at which we are looking.

Thinking of Sir John Millais' work in this connection, I cannot help feeling that there is here a whole world of difference in favour

¹ If black may be called a colour.

of the elder master. When every defect is fully noted, when the haste and carelessness which are nowadays so plainly visible are fully discounted, there still remains in the men and women painted by Millais that feeling of living flesh of which in Holl we are forced to note the absence. The place of the latter in English portrait-painting in future years will probably rank after that of Millais and Watts. There is in this last-mentioned artist's work especially an element of style, an impression of bigness (if the expression may be tolerated), which Holl did not possess. If we think of the great portrait-painters of earlier times, we find there are two points in which almost all their pictures agree, one being the possession of this element of style, the other, a certain quietude and absence of emphasis in the expression of the sitter. The early portraits do not shriek at you, their voices hardly rise above a whisper, and their words are Sibyllic in the variety of interpretations we may put upon them. Herein we touch a great weakness of modern art; it must always be explaining itself, as if the spectator couldn't be trusted to interpret. And I think Holl's painting "puts the dots on the i's" too blackly and too frequently. Seeking to differentiate carefully, one is apt to imagine peculiarities for which there is little real foundation; but still, making every allowance for fancy, it does seem to me true that all the people Frank Holl painted are in the habit of saying,¹ "I tell you I *am* the Prince of Wales," "I tell you I *am* Sir William Jenner," or whoever it may be, and calling you to witness the various details of their personality in support of the assertion. And this quality of insistence, of rampant personality, is one of the many bad effects caused by an artist having crowds of sitters all eager to have themselves painted by the fashionable portrait-painter of the day; they will not leave him time to be himself, or to study anything in them but their outer appearance. "Here I am; come along quick, and paint me!" they cry; and so the artist does, and when the picture is finished it has an indefinable look of the outside of a man only.

Let me, if possible, prevent my meaning on this point being misunderstood. A great artist may paint very excellent portraits and yet may not be a great portrait-painter; and this is not a paradox. There is a difference between a vivid likeness and great portrait-painting which it were too long to attempt to discuss here, but which rests perhaps upon the power of the painter to understand the character and to feel in sympathy with the finer instincts of his sitter. For in all great portraiture I fancy there is the feeling, if it may be so expressed, of *quiet* personality. Not a man angry or haughty, not a woman showing her teeth in a smile, or with her eyes full of tears, but of definite people who would be either haughty, or angry, or sad, or cheerful in a certain way. Now it has always seemed to me in

¹ In their pictured selves, of course, I mean.

looking at Holl's portraits that their real deficiency was that they always express a mood ; that the artist had not begun to paint them till he had got the idea of a mood, of a, so to speak, mental effect, before him, and then he had set to work and produced his picture. This is true even of his finest work in this branch of art : as, for instance, in the Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Jenner, and Lord Spencer portraits in this year's Academy ; in his less successful portraiture the mood depicted is frequently the artist's own, and this gave to many of his likenesses a curious resemblance. Some years ago—I forget how many—I wrote upon this point as follows, and I see no reason to change the main part of my opinion, though the manner of its expression is more suited to the columns of a newspaper than to the pages of a review.

Mr. Frank Holl is the most powerful and in some ways one of the best portrait-painters of the Academy, as he is one of the most original—an “Israels” of the middle classes. He is distinctly a tragedian ; his very mildest pictures savour of the “dagger and the bowl.” I have seen portraits (and good portraits too) by him of most estimable people—Deans and Masters of colleges, etc., etc., who never had a wrong thought in their lives, but to whom Mr. Holl has given such a don't-meet-me-on-a-dark-night kind of look, that one almost felt as if he must in the course of his painting have discerned some dreadful secret in those apparently blameless breasts, such “damnable faces” have his sitters shown. Portraiture which strikes the spectator in this way is by no means necessarily the best, or even the most true. The result is got by an exaggeration, very possibly an unconscious exaggeration, of two or three leading traits ; the work is really on the very verge of caricature ; it is a man seen in a flash of lightning, not seen and painted after intimate knowledge. Nevertheless, of its kind it is wonderful ; and there is a breadth of conception and a massive method of painting in these portraits of Mr. Holl's which renders them very impressive. In every case he seems to snatch at the main points of his sitter's character. It is the finer intellectual and moral gradations which are wanting, as are the finer gradations of light and shade ; probably both are inconsistent with the general aim of the painter.

But I confess it is not as a portrait-painter that I like best to think of Holl, or that I most deplore his loss. Good portrait-painters we have always had, and probably always shall have ; the rewards are great for such, the demand persistent ; the character of the English is in sympathy with such work ; the tradition of our art is in its favour. And, strange as it may seem, and violently as it will be

denied, it was not portraiture for which Mr. Frank Holl was supremely fitted. He had neither the coolness nor the intellectual breadth of mind which are necessary for the greatest achievements in this direction; and the artistic gifts which he did possess fitting him for this branch of art were of a superficial character, and, though sufficient to render his portraits striking and popular, were probably the very qualities which would have prevented their ever becoming really great.

This leads me to the consideration of that side of Frank Holl's art which was most genuine to him, and which, if more cultivated, would have rendered him a far greater artist than he ever would have been as a portrait-painter. The native quality of his art was pathos; the true domain of his painting was tragedy. Friends' advice, the blatant injustice of ignorant and prejudiced critics, and—alas! that it must be said—the temptation to gain instant popularity and monetary success, turned this true tragedian, this man who was endowed by nature with the gift of pathos as genuine and simple as it was intense, into a fashionable portrait-painter.

With the recollection of his earlier subjects vividly present to my mind, I can scarcely understand how it was that so many critics and picture-buyers hailed his departure from the imaginative art of his early manhood with so much enthusiasm. No doubt the subjects which in these early days found favour in Mr. Holl's sight were too entirely gloomy; people naturally resented the grave being forced upon their attention, in and out of season, and even the beautiful burial-service is apt to grow monotonous when its chief phrases are taken year after year as the title of a pathetic subject-picture. Still thinking of such works as "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away," the "At Newgate," and the "I am the Resurrection and the Life," with their sure striking of the note of genuine pathos, their unbiassed strong delineation of the beauty and dignity of sorrow, I have always felt there was a loss rather than a gain when Mr. Holl, year by year, put twenty portraits on his easel, and turned us out to order, with the same underlying hint of tragedy, deans and doctors, princes and painters, mayors and merchants. With the same underlying hint of tragedy in their faces! Look at any portrait you please by this artist, and say if this is not true; if the nature of the artist did not prove to the last stronger than his environment, and whether any amount of commonplace in the subject of his canvas availed entirely to conceal that tragic dramatic sentiment which sprang as it seemed unbidden from the painter's hand?

We do strange things with our artists in England: we are desperately afraid lest they should not be respectable and successful;

we judge their art by the dwelling-place of its master in a fashionable locality, by the amount of material dollars he gains per annum. How can a painter be expected to stand against such temptation? "Here is a palace for you and ten thousand a year, and a prince for your model!" So cries the world, and almost in a flash of light the words come true, and the easels on each of which stands the effigy of a celebrity throng the great studio, and between them paces restlessly, anxiously, hurriedly, the poor, rich, heaven-endowed genius, turning his back on those old sad, vivid dreams of tragedy and drama, death and beauty, sorrow and resignation, duty and hope, which had formed his ideal long ago. And the commissions multiply, and the critics applaud delightedly, and the carriages of the nobility roll to the door faster and faster, and the income increases day by day, and the facility and strength of the painter's hand increase too: but further and further into the distance retreats the old youthful ideal of his art—On the great canvases the gentle English girl no longer bends her head in patient sorrow beside the empty chair of her dead father; the mourners stand no longer by the grave, the old stories of the tragedy of life, of the felon, the deserter, the pauper, the besieged woman and her starving child, are hushed into silence. The great portrait-painter remains, but the great emotional artist of modern days has, in obedience to the bidding of society and success, stifled his soul within him, has forgotten the folk of his own rank and stifled that habit of mind which once called forth his truest sympathies.

Perhaps at a time when so many friends, relations, and admirers are sorrowing for Mr. Holl's untimely death such words may seem of undue emphasis, but that the death was so untimely is due in no small measure to the facts hinted at above. "He worked himself to death"; so all his friends and intimates are saying. "He would take no rest; he was strictly told that he must undertake less work." "He went for a holiday, and returned quickly and set to work again harder than ever." So, variously phrased, with more or less of truth or exaggeration, runs the account of Holl's latest days; and I hold it to be part of the duty of a public writer, even at some risk of being called uncharitable and unkind, to force home upon those who will care to listen the truth that in all human probability it was simply the fierce race for success, wealth, and fame which brought poor Frank Holl to the grave. Fashion and wealth and genius are a queer trio for one man to manage, and a painter who *has* to make ten thousand a year to support his style of life, must sooner or later either scamp his work, or increase it to such a degree that his health breaks down. While hundreds of painters can make but the barest livelihood, a cruel, thoughtless fashion dictates that some dozen or two men shall be employed on every occasion, fitting or unfitting,

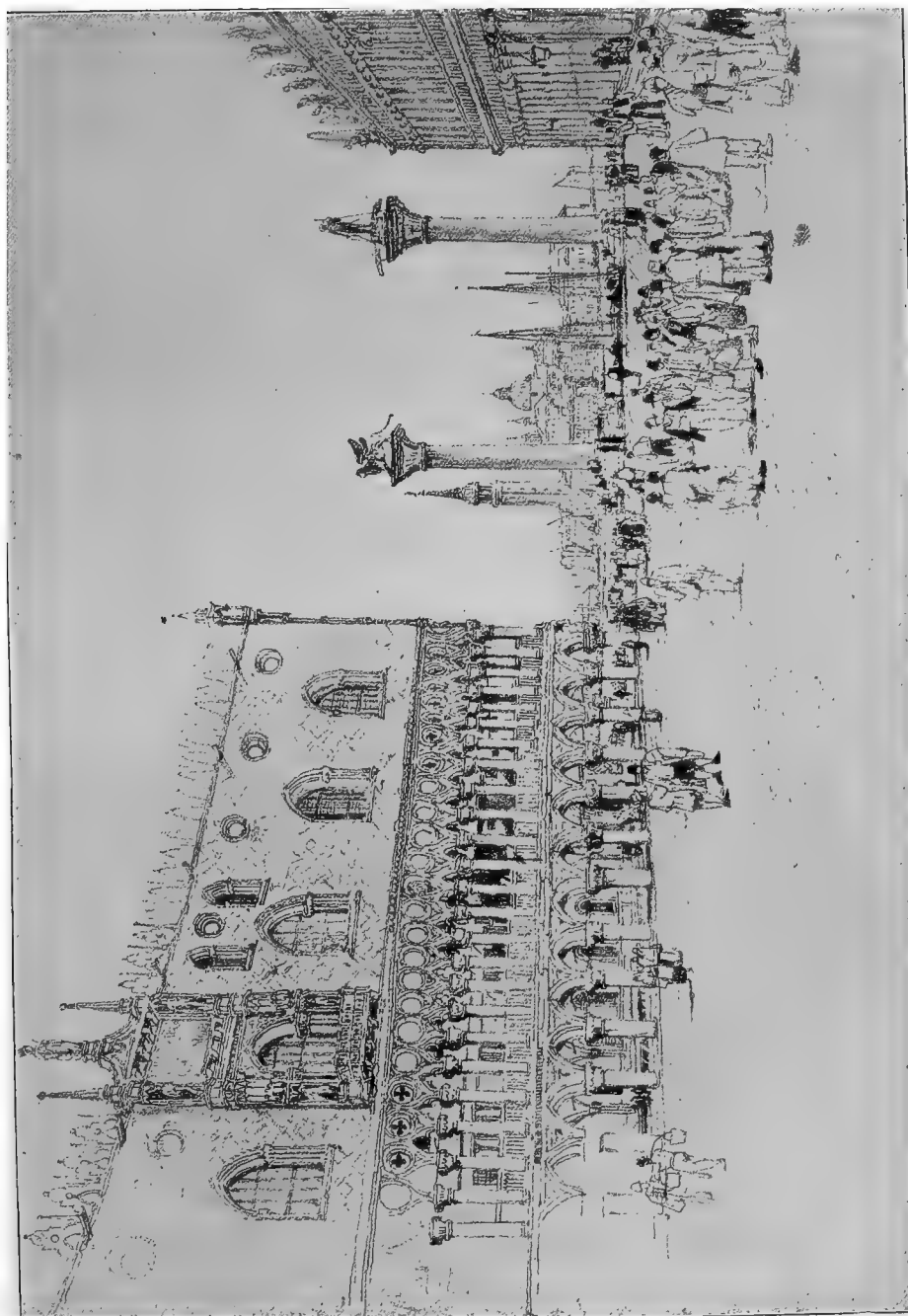
whether they have time or no; and the artist once drawn into this vortex of expense and popularity is no longer master of himself. He *must* live to some extent as his patrons live; he *must* be ready at all hours to force his art to work to order; he *must* produce a certain quantity to meet that huge expense into which he has almost insensibly been drawn. And so when his health breaks down it comes to pass that he has either to choose between leaving the unnatural position (social position) into which his popularity has forced him, or with weary hand and failing energies continue the task.

Is there no help for it? Must all our great artists nowadays succumb to this devil in disguise who whispers to them of social advancement and an income of ten thousand a year? Believe me, such things are inimical to art, if not inconsistent with it. The artist has one great advantage over all the rest of mankind: it is this, that his best pleasures cost—nothing! Think what that means. It means that his ten thousand a year, his social position are in *himself*; they can never be taken from him, save by his own act. But to preserve them he must live that straightforward honest life in which alone they can flourish: he must see things as they are, not as Mrs. Ponsonby de Tompkins chooses to represent them, he must possess his soul quietly with a few true-hearted friends, not strew it upon the highways of acquaintance; and, above all, he must do such work as it is in him to do, in obedience to his artistic instinct and knowledge, and not work to order in whatever direction he can make most money.

The woodcut given is a specimen of the work done by Holl in book illustration, and for unforced dramatic quality there is only one living English artist—Sir John Millais—whose early work in this branch of art would compare favourably therewith; and it is strange and somewhat painful to remember that when Mr. Millais (as he was then) produced work of this quality, he, too, was of Mr. Holl's age, and has since been enticed almost entirely into work which is less worthy of his genius. The worst part of portrait-painting in modern days is this, that it necessarily becomes in the majority of instances a question of money. An artist cannot feel a sympathy with his sitter to order, nor can he, if he is a fashionable painter, afford to decline all orders save from those with whom he can feel some sympathy. In consequence, the work, as is frequently the case with Sir John Millais, becomes hurried and insincere; at its best striving for some mere technical excellence.

To return to this illustration by Mr. Holl: it is worth while for those readers who care about such matters to compare the drawing with those by Millais in *Orley Farm* and *Framley Parsonage*,¹

¹ Both works, of course, by Anthony Trollope.



THE PIAZZETTA : VENICE

SAMUEL PROUT

which are, upon the whole, the best illustrations ever done for English novels, and which are also excellent specimens of the older fashioned style of wood-engraving now fast dying out.

In respect of the wood-cutting, these present plates are not to be compared to the earlier ones, but in artistic quality, the comparison is not *wholly* in favour of Sir John Millais. Mr. Holl's work appears to me to be far less beautiful in line, and less attractive in what may be perhaps called sentimental expression, but it is more intellectual and decidedly more dramatic. In light and shade also, the advantage is, I think, on his side. In Millais' earlier drawings there was always a certain heaviness—a blackness about the shadowed portions—owing, I think, to the minuteness of the manner in which they were worked and the artist's attempt to express more of the form and texture of the shadowed object than there was light enough to make clearly comprehensible. This is shown clearly in such a drawing as that of "Lady Mason after her Confession,"¹ and, for a still better example, in the "Cleopatra" of the illustrated Tennyson. Mr. Holl does not err in this respect, and indeed in the drawing here reproduced, the chiaroscuro is most admirable, alike unforced, picturesque, and brilliant.

Strong and good in drawing and composition from the technical point of view; most excellent in its arrangement of light and shade, it is nevertheless chiefly delightful for the simplicity and truth to nature of its sentiment, for the easy naturalness with which the scene is shown. I have forgotten what incident in *Phineas Redux* this drawing illustrates—nor does it much matter, the picture tells its own story; but it is worth consideration whether art of this sympathetic, unaffected kind is not the very best of which we Englishmen are capable; whether our real strength is not to be found, neither in imitating the liveliness and artistic originality, nor the Gallic grace of our French neighbours, but in preserving that somewhat stolid but sincere dignity and homeliness which are, to some extent, a part of our national character. A Frenchman will always beat us on his own ground (beat us artistically, I mean); but will he beat us on ours? I don't think any French artist with whose work I am acquainted could have produced such a picture as that here reproduced, in which strong artistic faculty is blended with a frank homeliness and simplicity. Such a design is equally an honour to the artist who conceived it, and to the writer whose book is illustrated, and is even an honour to the national life one phase of which is faithfully shown.

This is not the place to carry these notes further. They were undertaken by one who, personally unknown to the artist, has been

¹ In *Orley Farm*.

an admirer of his art from the beginning, and who feels most keenly the loss that his death will cause. If I have seemed to dwell less upon the brilliant qualities of his portraiture than upon what I think to have been his error (very unwillingly made and in obedience to great temptation) in leaving that field of ideal and emotional art in which he would have been so great, I have done so only because there has been so much said, and justly, in praise of his portraits, and so little remembered of his subject-work. Only last week I read in a well-known Review that Holl had no imagination, and that he always failed when he painted women portraits. As a matter of fact he never failed in painting women portraits, because he never attempted to paint one; and if the artist of "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away" had *no imagination* it would be interesting to know in what manner of work the reviewer considers that quality to exist. The truth is quite in the other direction, and the pleasantest thing about his portraiture is, not its insight, but the imaginative element with which the artist contrived to endow his pictures. A sense of stress, of drama, if not of tragedy, is to be found in all of them, and had he continued to paint subjects, that power, which was native to him, would have made him the first English artist who had been thoroughly capable of depicting the pathos and the tragedy of modern life.

AMY LEVY:¹ A REMINISCENCE
AND A CRITICISM.



HERE lies hidden deeply in the heart of the West Country a secluded valley whose surrounding hills are fledged with fern and slim, small small-leaved elms; while through the midst the tiniest of rivers winds its way to sea. The surrounding country is high and bare, with wind-swept fields and low stone fences, in whose turf-covered interstices Nature has sown a kindly crop of shrub-oak and wild flower. Here and there a poor village or quaint church-town with square grey tower lifts itself above the undulations of the moorland, and forms a centre alike for social gathering and religious devotion. Oftentimes indeed the tower served in the old days for sterner uses, and stood as a landmark for weary, storm-tossed sailors, or for a last stronghold of defence against lawless robber or marauding lord. From the valley, however, of which I speak no one would guess at the character of the surrounding country, at the wild cliffs which are within rifle-shot of its peaceful trees and waters, at the great breakers which roll ceaselessly in from the Atlantic upon the little sandy *Porth* to whose shore the valley-river hurries through the pleasant marsh-lands. For, where the declivity begins—two miles from the sea—a tall wood fills the hollow of the down, and clothes the descent thickly with feathery pine and elm, so densely grown that even the noisy stream flows unseen beneath the branches of the trees. The path beneath the trees is verdant with fern and flower, and winds onward and downward ever, till almost upon the sea-level it reaches a white swing-gate, beyond which half-a-dozen cottage-roofs mark the

¹ *Reuben Sachs* (Macmillan and Co.); *Miss Meredith* (Hodder and Stoughton); *A Minor Poet* (Fisher Unwin); *The Romance of a Shop* (Fisher Unwin).

last descent of the hill. If we pass the gate, the village inn, cynosure of the locality, lies before us at the base of a field orchard, backed by a row of elms, above which in springtime the rooks and jackdaws wheel and chatter noisily. On the right, the river rushes from the woods under a rough bridge of stone and timber within a dozen yards of the stables and farm-buildings at the back of the hostelry; on the left, a little brook borders the steep lane in haste to join the larger stream, and on the side of the hill beyond the brook, a wide path leads up to an old stone manor-house, which has now for many a year been used as a convent by the nuns of Lanherne.

Here it was that one day some years ago, weary but not sated with a long summer's painting on the Cornish coast, I came almost by chance—having driven twenty miles across country from my last resting-place in quest of fresh material. How easy to recollect, how difficult, if not impossible, to convey the impression of that first entrance to what became to me in after-time almost a home. A dark doorway leading to two or three narrow rooms, equally compounded, as I soon grew to know, of bar, sitting-room, and kitchen; a distant view of villagers over their beer in the furthest room, and a shy girl with the true west-country rose-flush on her cheek serving them; gleams of pewter, glass, and a *silhouette* of a stout, broad-shouldered man, who seemed to be silently master of the situation; the usual plain chairs and tables, dark with use and age, in the front room, and, with a quiet, self-contained manner in which dignity and kindness were subtly blended, a lady waiting, in the old phrase, *to know my will*. My *will* was to stop if I could—if I might—for evidently here it was a question not of money so much as of goodwill—so I proffered my request for accommodation somewhat hesitatingly. "Would they put up a painter for a few days? Could I have a bedroom and a room to put my litter in?" and so on. I was conscious, not altogether comfortably, of a quiet, judging glance—an estimation—a pause—before my interlocutress answered, having apparently decided in my favour, "Would I come upstairs and see?" [the faintest note of interrogation would express the question]. So she took me upstairs into a long low chamber, which certainly did not provide the usual accommodation I had been accustomed to find in country hostelrys. The walls were covered with pictures, in one of which I recognised a photograph from a friend's work, chiefly sketches in oil and water-colour; the piano was heavy with music, most of which seemed to be Chopin and Beethoven; and a volume of Schubert stood upright in front of the keys. The bookcase was literally crammed with books—*Esmond* standing by the side of Newman's *Apologia* and Kingsley's *Water Babies*, and Hawker's *Cornish Ballads* fraternising amicably with *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* and the *Inland Voyage*. The mantelpiece, too, was crowded

with photographs, and some big white lilies stood in pots in front of the lattice windows.

Try to fancy it: a still July afternoon, the sun bright without the house, shining on the grey elms and the gnarled apple-trees which stood in an orchard close by, occasionally only the laugh of a child or the sound of an unhurried foot passing down the lane seaward, a faint suggestion of sound in the air which told of the unseen ocean, and an intermittent clinking of mugs from the kitchen below, where, as I discovered afterwards, the more respectable amongst the villagers were allowed—the word is strictly accurate, for they were not invited or encouraged—to take their afternoon beer. The interior of the room was dim, for the house was an old stone one with very thick walls, and the windows were but the ordinary cottage lattice filled with diamond panes of indifferent glass, and cumbrous wooden sashes and crossbars. My conductress stood gravely by the door, expectant, but not anxious for my decision. I asked her if this was the room that she proposed to give me, and she replied quite simply that it was the only one she and her sister had, but——anyhow the matter was arranged, and I stayed. The days passed quickly, the weather was perfect, and (fortunately) no one came to stay at the inn but myself. My hostess and I grew to be very good friends, and every evening when supper was well over, and the last of the respectable villagers had been gently suggested away to his wife and family; when the father, who was nearly fourscore, had creaked his solid way to bed, and the son, who lived at an adjoining farm, had mounted his nag and clattered homeward, she would come softly upstairs, and opening the door of my sitting-room, start the evening's entertainment, as it were, by asking if there were anything more that she could do for me. This was a *formula*, as Charles Reade would put it, to which I duly replied, generally with the request for a little whisky and water, which she would bring, and still linger, standing just inside the room with one hand resting against the half-shut door, and the other holding her bedroom candlestick. I can see her now—a tall slight figure, with deep-set, serious eyes, from which it struck me that the light and colour had faded, a pale face, a lofty forehead, and plainly-braided light brown hair, above all a sensitive nervous mouth, the upper lip rather too long and straight for beauty, and habitually pressed against the lower as though to conceal pain. The dress, always very simple, of some grey or brownish-yellow stuff, the whole expression of the figure and face gentle, yet austere. I never, in my life, met a woman so entirely mistress of herself, so secure in her fortress of purity and unselfishness, so resolutely brave, not only to do the thing which she thought right, but to make others do it, if speech or action of hers could possibly avail. Still, even a good woman is but a woman after all, and her one innocent enjoyment

indoors was—a talk. So night after night we chatted for a long time in our respective positions, I sitting back in an arm-chair with my pipe and grog, and she standing by the table or door—for no entreaty would prevail upon her to sit down.

She told me many things—of the wild flowers and ferns that grew in Carnanton woods, of the wrestling bouts in which her father had distinguished himself a generation since, of her relations and friends in London, of the awful weather “to the Porth” that winter, of the quiet holy life led by the nuns at the grey stone abbey which looked down upon the river and the inn, of the young couples who would come to them now and again to spend their honeymoon, of her fondness for the sea, the fields, and the wood, and yet how she could “seldom get out for a walk” during the summer time; of her brief visits to London, of her intense love of music, of the books in the little bookcase I had noticed when I first arrived, and how most of them had been given her at various times by *friends* who had “stayed with us at the Falcon.” Amongst the photographs on the mantelpiece, one was of a small, dark girl, of unmistakably Jewish type, with eyes that seemed too large for the delicate features, and far too sad for their youthfulness of line and contour. In its way I had rarely seen a face which was at once so interesting, so intellectual, so beautiful, and, alas! so unhappy; and somehow, after the first subjects of talk had been well exhausted, our speech would be apt frequently to turn in the direction of the original, and my hostess would tell me all about Amy Levy.¹ She had come down there ill, it appeared, some two years before, and had been nursed—that was a matter of course (Miss —— nursed everybody, if they would in the least give her permission—sometimes, indeed, when they would not)—and she had been a dweller in Bloomsbury all her life, and knew nothing about the country; and my landlady had, in her capacity of nurse, taken her into the woods and fields, and down amongst the caves on the Porth, and taught her all those strange, hidden trifles of earth, sea, and air which only the dwellers in, and lovers of, the country know, and the girl—for she was quite a girl then—had taught her instructress—what? Had you asked Miss ——, she would have told you that there were few subjects upon which she had not talked with her patient, and gained from her some store of knowledge and thought.

In the Club the other night by chance I took up a very small, quaintly-bound book, entitled *Miss Meredith*, and turning to the title-page, found it was by Amy Levy; and between the time at which I first heard her name in the manner above described, and this present time when I read her last work, there had come to her—or

¹ Let me be accurate; for though my hostess told me much of Miss Levy's charm, gentleness, and intelligence, she seldom spoke of the details of her life.



THE END OF A DAY.— ESTHER ISAACS

rather she had brought herself to that terribly strange, sad ending of which we all know. In life I never met her, but during the last six or seven years during which she has written, and at the close of which she has died, I have always had this pleasant picture of these two strangely-assorted women, the dweller in the country and the dweller in the town, the undoubting believer and the undoubting sceptic, the optimist and the pessimist, the old and the young, the *Martha* of the village inn, and the *Mary* of the latest developments of artistic thought, science, and unbelief, joining together on the broad ground of a common humanity, and finding in the silence of Cornish woods, and the beauty of Cornish streams and seas, equal interest and equal delight—so that I read *Miss Meredith* as perhaps a critic should read every book if he would do entire justice to its author—that is to say, with personal sympathy, and a belief that I should find the story extremely interesting; and so reading, I did find it, not only interesting, but good, delicate, sincere, artistic work—marked with strong originality, and full of nascent knowledge, and perception which was rather hidden than displayed: a book, in fact, conceived from the point of view of art, and adequately carried out without weakness, affectation, or advertisement. It is hard that one can only say this when it can be productive of no pleasure to the author, and when praise or blame are equally futile.

Indeed I should scarcely have thought of now writing concerning Miss Levy's work were it not that I feel that in some measure I owe amends to her art. For it so happened, that the opportunity came to me some years ago, was offered me, indeed, by the authoress herself, of accepting one of her stories.¹ Rightly or wrongly—I would fain think wrongly now—I did not consider it up to the mark; and—while asking her to give me a chance upon another occasion—rejected it. Let me now therefore do whatever is possible to repair my mistake. Works of art are not very common nowadays, or indeed at any time, and we are not so glutted with writing of fine quality that we can afford to let even little masterpieces pass away quite unrecognised. Though it seems to be now agreed that it is impolitic and unnecessary personally to honour any great writer who can no longer work for us, no one has yet asserted that it is equally blamable to endeavour to snatch good work from too early oblivion.

Miss Meredith is the story of the engagement of an English governess by an Italian family, of her sojourn with them at Pisa, and of her love affair with the younger son of the house. The materials are therefore sufficiently simple. The story is, in fact—as Lawrence described *Sword and Gown* to be—a chaplet of cameos with sufficient interest to string them together. Nor are the characters, with the exception

¹ I was then editing the *Universal Review*.

of the heroine, specially interesting or remarkable. Throughout, the work is slight, but the slightness is that of intention, not of laziness nor incompetence. The especial flavour of the writing lies in the author's mastery over her material. This appears alike in the extent to which each character is delineated, and the detail which is suggested in relation to each part of the story. Nothing can in one sense be more realistic than the descriptions of the various scenes and incidents of the drama; and yet the realism is so deftly introduced, so easily dropped and taken up again, so interwoven with the thoughts and characters of the principal personages, that this accuracy of detail only strikes us upon critical examination, and never for one moment arrests us in our perusal. The realism is, in fact, that of the best modern French painting, in which detail is introduced *plus* the light it is seen in, *plus* its relative aspect to the scene of which it forms a part. If I did not fear to use a painter's expression, I should say that the *planes* of this novel are especially well preserved, and with the single exception of one exquisite story by Miss Thackeray,¹ I am acquainted with no tale, professing to tell the love episode of a girl's life, in which emotion and fact are kept so strictly in focus. Compare, for instance, the method of such narrative as that of *Cometh up as a Flower*, or its masculine prototype, *As in a Looking-Glass*; with that of Amy Levy in *Miss Meredith*, and it is impossible to avoid noticing the ill-balance (despite great literary ability) of the two first-mentioned books. The truth is, that love, and its surrounding passions, do *not* fill up the whole or even the major part of any human being's life, even of the life of a young girl; and all books which simply tell the story of the heroine's emotional experience, omitting the account of her intellectual and physical lives, must infallibly be caricatures of the passion they profess to represent. Miss Meredith—who at the crises of her love affairs gets tired, or hungry, or angry because she is snubbed, or feels the marble floor cold through the threadbare carpets—is a human being whom we can understand, and imagine to have possibly existed; and so, too, when she, as it were, frescoes her more intense interest with her perceptions of the angularity and ridiculous *coiffure* of her pupil, with irritation at the fussiness of her pupil's mother, and with many little sharp commentaries, not in the least emotional or sentimental, and frequently rather ill-tempered, upon the life which is going on around her. To write in such a manner as the above, and yet to preserve the more ideal portion of the story, and render it in no way trivial or commonplace, denotes very high art, and is equivalent in fiction to such work as that of Israels in painting—work which is apparently homely in subject, and simple in execution, but yet containing many elements of beauty and pathos, and really the result, from a technical point of view, of a complete mastery over its material and its method.

¹ i.e. *The Story of Elizabeth*.

I have selected the following passage to exemplify this, not so much on account of its being a specially excellent one, as because it appears to me to give a fair example of the mingled poetry and realism which form the chief charm of Amy Levy's work, and also because there is to be found therein something of that intense, passionate, almost despairing, personal note which characterised the author's habit of mind, and which—in a greater or less degree—is to be traced throughout her writing.

CHAPTER VII.—“THE HOME COMING OF THE REBEL.”

“THE covered gallery which ran along the back of the house was flooded in the afternoon with sunshine. Here, as the day declined, I loved to pace, basking in the warmth and rejoicing in the brightness, for, mild and clear as the day might be out of doors, within the thick-walled palace it was always mirk and chill.

“The long, high wall of the gallery was covered with pictures—chiefly paintings of dead and gone Brogi—most of them worthless taken singly, taken collectively interesting as a study of the varieties of family types.

“Here was Bianca, to the life, painted two centuries ago; the old Marchese looked out from a dingy canvas three hundred years old at least, and a curious mixture of Romeo and his sister disported itself in powder amid a florid eighteenth-century family group. Conspicuous among so much indifferent workmanship hung a genuine Bronzino of considerable beauty, representing a young man, whose charming aspect was scarcely marred by his stiff and elaborate fifteenth-century costume. The dark eyes of this picture had a way of following one up and down the gallery in a rather disconcerting manner; already I had woven a series of little legends about him, and had decided that he left his frame at night like the creatures in *Ruddygore* to roam the house as a ghost where once he had lived as a man.

“Opposite the pictures, on which they shed their light, was a row of windows, set close together deep in the thick wall, and rising almost to the ceiling. They were not made to open, but through their numerous and dingy panes I could see across the roofs of the town to the hills, or down below to where a neglected bit of territory, enclosed between high walls, did duty as a garden.

“In one corner of this latter stood a great ilex tree, its massive grey trunk old and gnarled, its blue-green foliage casting a wide shadow. Two or three cypresses, with their broom-like stems,

sprang from the overgrown turf, which, at this season of the year, was beginning to be yellow with daffodils, and a thick growth of laurel bushes ran along under the walls. An empty marble basin approached by broken pavement, marked the site of a forgotten fountain, the stonecrop running riot about its borders; the house-leek thrusting itself every now and then through the interstices of shattered stone. Forlorn, uncared for as was this square of ground, it had for me a mysterious attraction; it seemed to me that there clung to it through all change of times and weathers something of the beauty in desolation which makes the charm of Italy.

“It was about four o'clock on Thursday afternoon, and I was wandering up and down the gallery in the sunshine.

“I was alone for the first time during the last three days, and was making the best of this brief respite from the gregarious life to which I saw myself doomed for some time to come. The ladies were out driving, paying calls, and making a few last purchases for the coming festivities. In the evening Andrea was expected, and an atmosphere of excitement pervaded the whole household.

“‘They are really fond of him, it seems,’ I mused—‘these people who, as far as I can make out, are so cold.’ Then I leaned my forehead disconsolately against the window, and had a little burst of sadness all by myself.

“The constant strain of the last few days had tired me, I longed intensely for peace, for rest, for affection, for the sweet and simple kindness of home.

“I had even lost my interest in the coming event which seemed to accentuate my forlornness.

“What were other people's brothers to me? Let mother or one of the girls come out to me, and I would not be behindhand in rejoicing. ‘No one wants me, no one cares for me, and I don't care for any one either,’ I said to myself gloomily, brushing away a stray tear with the back of my hand. Then I moved from the window and my contemplation of the ilex tree, and began slowly pacing down the gallery, which was getting fuller every minute of the thick golden sunlight.

“But suddenly my heart seemed to stop beating, my blood froze, loud pulses fell to throbbing in my ears, I remained rooted to the spot with horror, while my eyes fixed themselves on a figure, which, as yet on the further side of a shaft of moted sunlight, was slowly advancing towards me from the distant end of the gallery.

“‘Is it the Bronzino come to life?’ whispered a voice in the back recess of my consciousness. The next moment I was laughing at my own fears, and was contemplating with interest and

astonishment the very flesh-and-blood presentment of a modern gentleman, which stood bowing before me.

“‘I fear I have startled you,’ said a decidedly human voice, speaking in English, with a peculiar accent, while the speaker looked straight at me, with a pair of dark eyes that were certainly like those of the Bronzino.

“‘Oh, no; it was my own fault for being so stupid,’ I answered breathlessly, shaken out of my self-possession.

“‘I am Andrea Brogi,’ he said, with a little bow; ‘and I believe I have the pleasure of addressing Miss Clarke?’”

The situation in the above, it will be observed, is not specially original. We have all read something like this before, when the hero that is to be, comes down the long gallery and startles the heroine with his likeness to one of his ancestors' portraits. But it is redeemed from the commonplace by the brisk, slight manner in which the episode is touched, and the fulness of personal feeling with which what may be called the mechanism of the scene is informed. Few things could be better in their way than the little paragraph describing *the neglected bit of territory, enclosed between high walls, which did duty as a garden*. That paragraph seems to me to hit the exact mean between ordinary conventional description and the too elaborate word-painting which has been of late in fashion. There is just the suggestion of poetry, of romance, of feeling, but it does not elaborate the first, magnify the second, or exhaust the third. You have the bit of territory plainly before you, and as Miss Meredith saw it, and there the matter is happily, easily left to take its right place in the picture. Besides which, a writer may be pardoned for remarking that the mere mechanism of these few sentences is completely satisfactory. *There clung to it through all change of times and weathers*—no one who was not a good workman would have written that phrase, no one who had not an ear for the beauty of words and their fitting collocation.

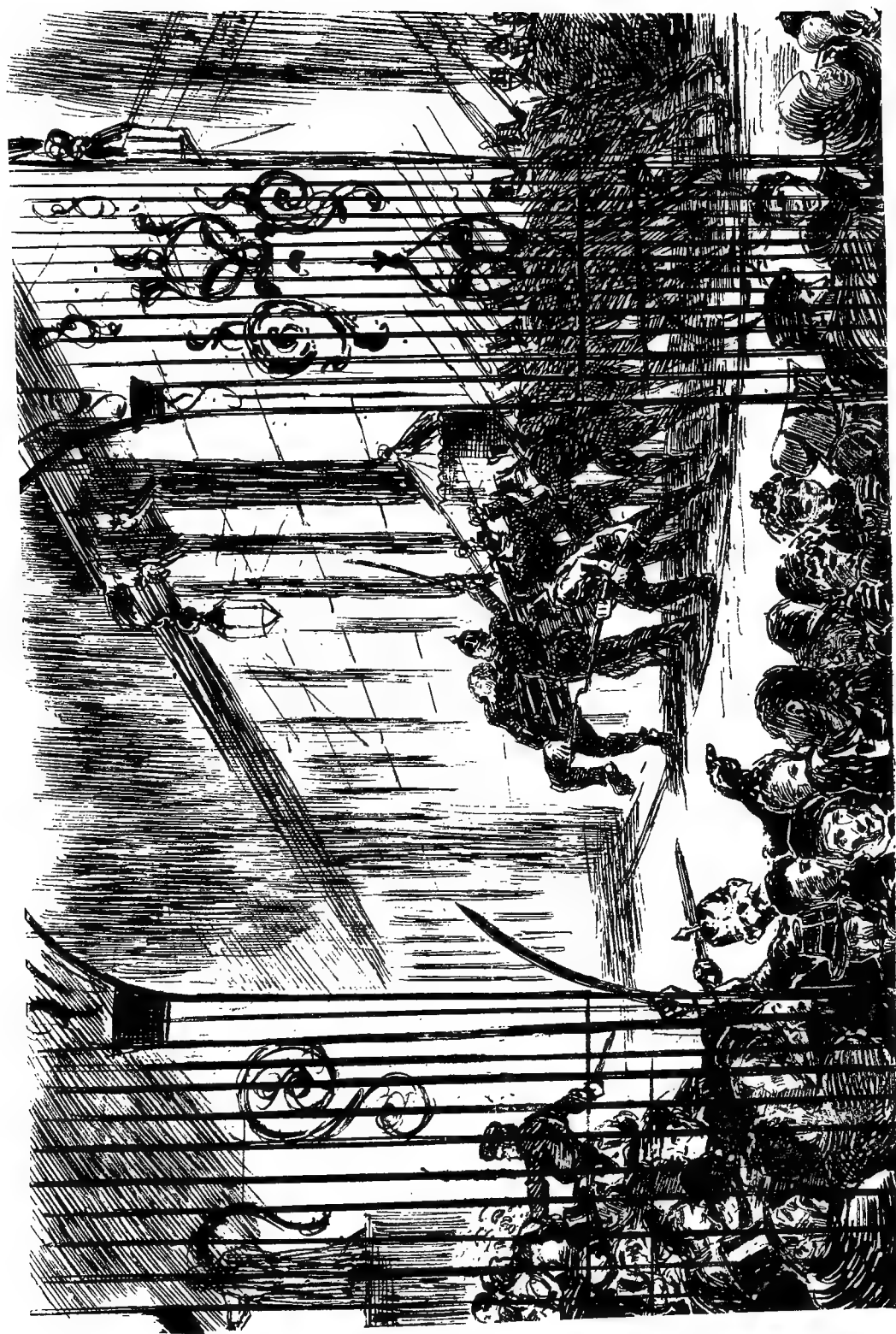
Here again is another little piece of word-music :

“‘They are really fond of him it seems,’ I mused—‘these people who, as far as I can make out, are so cold.’”

Nothing can be less pretentious. The phrasing is almost bald in its intense simplicity and the naturalness of its expression, but as the words fall slowly one by one they have a strange, deliberate music of their own. The end of the little sentence completes the sound. We listen for it as for the final splash with which a pebble reaches the water, after springing from rock to rock down the face of a precipitous cliff. Here again, within four lines of the last quotation, is another instance of the same merit : *I longed intensely for peace*,

for rest, for affection, for the sweet and simple kindness of home. And here we get, not only the incisive, completed music of the previous sentence, but the fuller, gentler tone wholly in accord with the sentiment expressed. The old test after all is the best, and try these sentences by it—namely, by the endeavour to substitute a synonym for any of the words used, or by altering the arrangement of those which the author has selected.

To pass to another matter, and to one of more interest to the general reader than this of mere craftsmanship, let us ask what is the one essential, vital characteristic of our author's writing? What is it that separates that writing from the work of her contemporaries and her predecessors? And here I find myself, not for the first time, on very delicate ground. The English habit of mind is so little accustomed to discriminate between art and personality, so little accustomed to excuse any research into a writer's or a painter's personal motives or feelings, that criticism which seeks to penetrate the secret of these, is but too frequently esteemed impertinent, even if it be not mistaken. Especially in the present instance am I, from the circumstances of the case, extremely anxious to avoid causing the slightest vexation to any living friend or relative of the author of *Miss Meredith*. And yet, when so much has been said in praise, it would be neither just, nor, in the long-run, kind, to hesitate to mark the note which appears to the present writer to be out of tune in the general harmony. That such a note does exist is beyond question, and it is traceable alike in Miss Levy's poetry and her prose. Perhaps the most easy definition of what is lacking would be to characterise the author's habit of mind as a pessimistic one, pessimist not only with regard to the expectations to be formed from the circumstances of life, and from the actions, and with regard to the motives of others, but the far deeper pessimism which not only doubts, but scarcely regrets the absence of, any deep-seated happiness, or possible sufficient good. The conjecture, the observation, the thought, the pathos, and the humour, which are found so subtly and skilfully blended in Miss Levy's work, are perhaps all, if carefully examined, a little thin, and more than a little hard. One can hardly imagine that this writer would have been an easier person to live with, than she found the world an easy place to live in; and finding it very difficult, having perception and knowledge and intuitive feeling sufficient to perceive its incongruities, to estimate its difficulties, and to gauge its sorrow, she does not seem to have arrived at that further stage which renders such an experience possible despite its sadness—the stage in which the recognition of sorrow and pain turns freely, if not gladly, to action, which seeks to lighten the one and decrease the other. Indeed, if we are not very much mistaken, Miss Levy's habitual intellectual aspect towards men,



PRUSSIANS CLEARING THE PLACE STANISLAUS

SYDNEY HALL

women, and things in general, was not unlike that other celebrated one which characterised *Mr. Gedge, the landlord of the Royal Oak*, who found all his customers in the country village in which he lived *a poor lot, sir, big and little*, and who, when he removed to a large manufacturing town, was still followed by the same bitter experience, and the most notable point in *Reuben Sachs*, at all events the point which struck the present writer most clearly, was the detachment of mind which allowed its young Jewish author to write, not exactly so bitterly, but with such absolute indifference, about the national and social characteristics and peculiarities of her own people. There was something positively inhuman in such work proceeding from the lips of one who was scarcely more than a girl, and it seemed to show not so much the result of bitter experience and thwarted effort, as a preconceived determination to see the seamy side—a deliberate attempt to banish from her work every gentle prejudice and kindly affection which might have pleaded for a softer judgment. As is not infrequently the case, the result of this determined, self-conscious impartiality, was to produce the very bias against which such strict precaution had been taken.

For fortunately it is just as easy to err on the pessimist as on the optimist side of things, and if we set out very determinedly to make no allowance for sympathy or sentiment, to suspect our own emotions as well as those of others, and analyse to the utmost possible degree our perceptions and our prejudices, we are very apt to end by failing to see the use and attractiveness of sympathy, feeling, or sentiment at all, and very apt to doubt whether one perception or prejudice is not much the same as another, equally true for the people, useful for the magistrate, and false for the philosopher; and so feeling, or at least so arguing—for some imperfection of kindness in thought and action is apt to linger with the most cynical—there is apt to grow upon us that detachment of mind which is, beyond all other qualities, the most fatal possession for the story-teller. In the long run, readers will pardon all else but superiority, and, strange as it may seem, an author is *not* at liberty, *quâ* the general reader, to treat his characters, or rather the emotions and experiences of his characters, with utter indifference; all else he may do to and with them—plunge them into the most utter misery, or reward them with a happiness such as few of us have the luck to experience outside the covers of a book. But it is quite imperative, if the author is to retain any hold upon his readers' sympathies, that he should *feel* with the people he has created. So truly is this the case, that if we read the lives of the great story-tellers, we find that almost in proportion to their greatness, was the sense of responsibility towards their *dramatis personæ*, and their concern for what was to happen to them in the pages as yet unwritten. It is an

interesting chapter in the history of literature, this which tells us how one by one, in many ages and many lands, the romancers fell under the spell of their own creations; and while the world stood waiting to know how Becky Sharp would deceive her husband, whether Paul Dombey would die, or what was to be the final incident in Jean Valjean's pitiful history, Thackeray, Dickens, and Hugo were sitting in their working-rooms in London and at Paris, more interested than their youngest reader in the final catastrophe of treachery, death, and suffering, of which they were slowly working out the incidents. Much of the change which has come over fiction of late years seems to me to be connected with this loss of interest, this lack of responsibility and credence in the author, towards his story and his characters. One belief has been substituted for another. The writer of to-day believes in himself where he once believed in his people; and for such a faith he has the appropriate reward, for if readers concern themselves with him at all, it is with him personally, and not the folk whom he creates. Many of us in the old days sorrowed with Sidney Carton or Colonel Newcome, with that kindly, personal sorrow that we feel when those who are really near to us suffer; but who would dream of being pitiful to the dissected personalities who walk about without any of their seven skins in Mr. Howells' stories, or to those of glorified country squires who drag their elephant rifles and dress waistcoats through trails of blood, and hordes of howling savages, in quest of buried treasure or forgotten cities? We feel that to sympathise with such heroes as these would be certainly futile and probably impertinent. We can imagine them saying, *Don't know you!* to any proffer of sympathy or comprehension. And, in a lesser degree but still markedly, this change is manifest even in stories such as *Miss Meredith*, which may be said to be in a measure built on the old model, and in which analysis is still restrained within reasonable limits, and the vagaries of filibustering romance are not substituted for more accustomed and genuine sources of interest. Miss Meredith's story, cleverly, suggestively, prettily, as it is told, is nevertheless told with the author's sense of its slight importance leaking out in nearly every line. There is a flavour of scorn in the telling of each incident.

After all, however, it is by *Reuben Sachs* that Miss Levy's work will be most fitly and finally judged. This is her most important book, and is moreover the story which contains her most elaborate studies of character and her most ambitious writing. And *Reuben Sachs* is, despite all its power and originality, a disappointing book. The divorce of sympathy between the author and the characters depicted, is complete and manifest, and is forced upon us at every turn in the narrative. A few touches of kindness there are indeed



THE CAPTIVE OF THE CAUCASUS

HARRINGTON MANN

From the original drawing in the possession of the author

here and there, in the delineation of the heroine, Judith Quixano, but for scarcely another character throughout the book is there a good word said unaccompanied by a sneer or a criticism, and one especial trick of thought is continually recurring, which to the present writer greatly militates against the enjoyment of the story. This is Miss Levy's habit of setting down any unamiable peculiarity of one of her characters which she may have to notice as a tribal peculiarity or Jewish characteristic, or some similar phrase which drives home, as it were, against her own people, the general accusation, by means of the individual instance. Throughout the narrative is kept up this continual harping on the unamiable, vulgar, or sordid traits of the Jewish race, till at last one feels inclined to say pettishly, "Why can't the woman leave her 'people' alone, and if she sees nothing worthy of admiration in the Jewish community, go elsewhere for the subject-matter of her story?" Not that the author's accusations, complaints, or criticisms strike us as much exaggerated or unjust, but that so evidently she was not the right person to say them; and their continual recurrence is an error in art, as well as taste, for reasons which are sufficiently obvious. The truth is that Miss Levy's dissatisfaction had a far deeper root than dislike to Semitic usages and peculiarities. The whole note of *Reuben Sachs* is one of depression, of disgust with, or rather of distaste for life; especially for ordinary middle-class uneventful life, with its timid proprieties, conventional pleasures, and unaspiring ideals. Despite these and other drawbacks of a similar kind, *Reuben Sachs* must be counted as a remarkable *tour de force* for a young author, if only because of the breadth of character-drawing, of the numerous slight yet vivid sketches of various types introduced therein, and of the ease with which the teller of the story stage-manages her *dramatis personæ*, and conveys to the reader the sense of reality both in them and their surroundings. There are few cleverer passages in latter-day fiction than that which describes the dinner-party in Portland Place after the fasting of the Day of Atonement. Not only is it good in humour and in varied penetration into the varied idiosyncrasies of the numerous people who take part therein, but the author has contrived to preserve the drama, the current of her story, in a most subtle, skilful manner. We feel the on-coming tragedy gradually revealing itself through the commonplace utterances of Mr. Bertie Lee-Harrison, through the descriptions of Aunt Rebecca and Uncle Samuel, through the squabbles of the children, through even the silence of the heroine. Twice or thrice in later portions of the book, the uneventful story rises almost to the level of tragedy. The heroine loves and is loved by a man whose ambition and common sense are stronger than his passion, and having to choose between what is most prudent for his future political career, and what is most pleasant and ideal to his own

perception, he chooses without hesitation, and almost without regret, the path of practicality and worldly wisdom, and the heroine scarcely blames him. She recognises as clearly as himself his right to do what is best from the world's point of view, and scarcely allowing him time to decide, much less to repent of his decision, she allies herself to a small, estimable, polite, and well-connected gentleman, who can give her a comfortable home, and who will not expect from her any especial devotion. So the hero Reuben Sachs gets elected to his constituency, and his sweetheart marries her *slight Sir Robert with his watery smile and educated whisker*, and the former duly succeeds in the House, and the latter lives comfortably enough we are led to suppose, or at all events quietly enough, in a flat at Albert Hall Mansions, till one day suddenly her husband tells her at dinner, just before the start for some evening reception, that Reuben Sachs is dead :

"It was the first time for some weeks that they had dined alone together, and conversation did not flow freely.

"Bertie looked up again, fixing his eyes, not on her face, but on the row of pearls at her throat.

" 'My dear, you will be very much shocked.'

" 'Yes?' said Judith interrogatively, eating her soup.

" 'Reuben Sachs is dead.'

" 'It is not true,' said Judith—and then she actually smiled. . . .

" ' . . . cardiac disease was the immediate cause of his death—cardiac disease,' repeated Bertie, with mournful enjoyment of the phrase, and pulling a long face as he spoke.

" Judith, sitting there like an automaton, eating something that tasted like sawdust, something that was difficult to swallow, was vividly conscious of only this—that Bertie must be silenced at any cost. Anything else could be borne, but not Bertie's fluent regrets.

" Another woman would have fainted : there had never been any mercy for her : but at least she would not sit there while Bertie talked of it.

" So she lifted up her face, her stony face, and turned the current of his talk.

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" He had gone at last, and she stood there motionless by the mantelpiece, staring at the card for Lady Kemys' 'At home.'

" 'Infinite æons' seemed to divide the present moment from that other moment, half an hour ago, when she had told herself carelessly, indifferently, that she would meet Reuben that night.

" It struck her now that all the sorrow of her life, all the suffering

she had undergone would be wiped out, would be as nothing, if only she could indeed meet Reuben—could see his face, hear his voice, touch his hand. Everything else looked trivial, imaginary; everything else could have been forgotten, forgiven; only this thing could never be forgiven him, this inconceivable thing—that he was dead.

“Before the great mysteries of life her soul grew frozen and appalled.

“It seemed to her, as she sat here in the fading light, that this is the bitter lesson of existence: that the sacred serves only to teach the full meaning of sacrilege; the beautiful of the hideous; modesty of outrage; joy of sorrow; life of death.”

So with a little paragraph hinting at hope for Judith in the future, through the germ of another life which was even then quickening within her, the book ends.—With all its faults of temper, of taste, of exaggerated requirement from, and too facile discontent with life—a strong book, full of genuine if mistaken thought, full of keen perception and minutely accurate observation. Full, too, of—bathed in as it were—that atmosphere of personal feeling by which works of art alone really exist; for though the author is superficially scornful enough of the puppets she has created, and the people whose shortcomings she sees so clearly, she is nevertheless at heart not scornful at all, but only simply, passionately, almost childishly angry with the deficiencies and inconsistencies of life. An idealist who has missed her way, she would fain be pessimistic, fain be matter-of-fact, but the effort is palpably insincere, and is but the reaction from the qualities which she professes to despise.

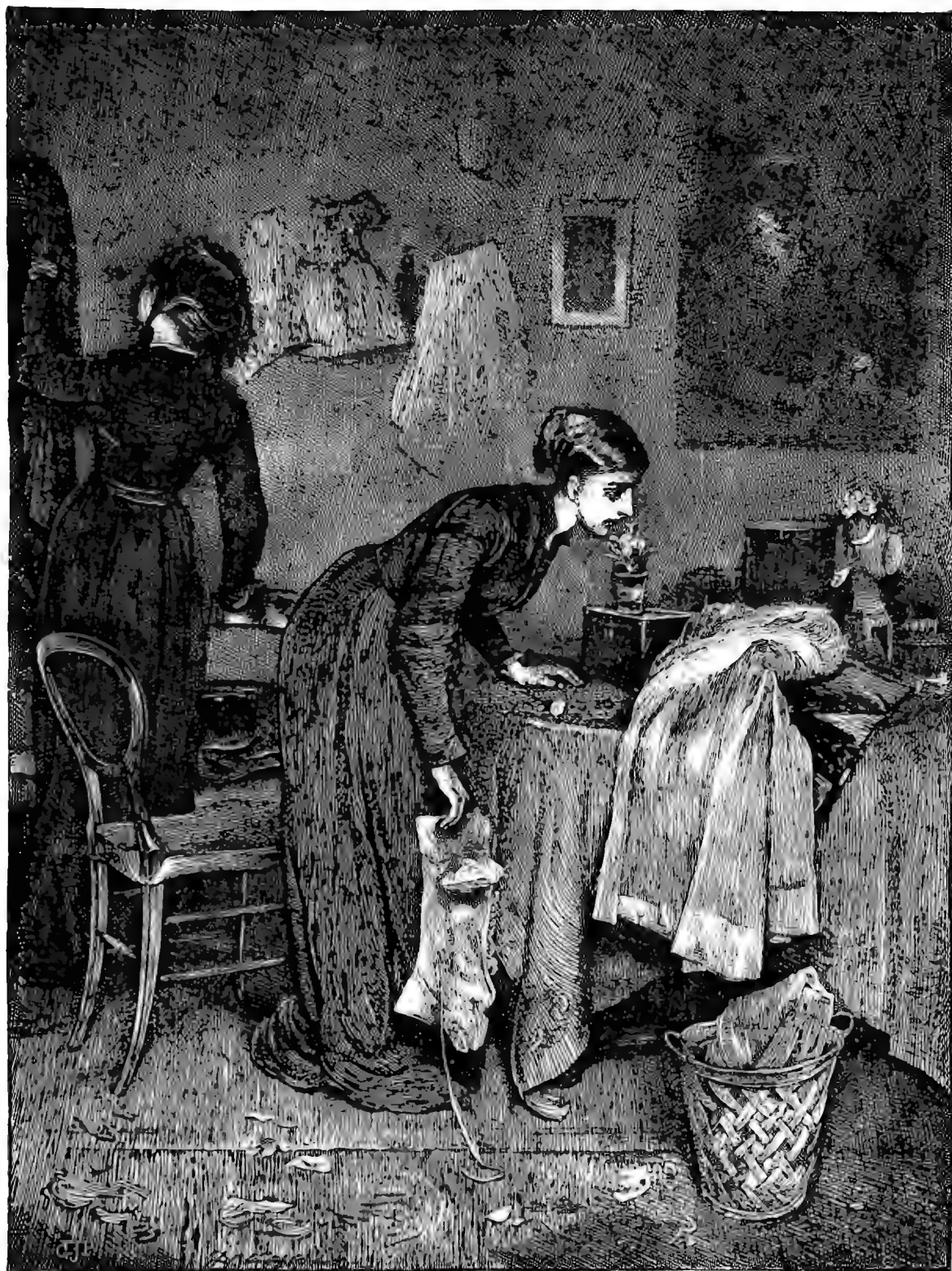
In view of what occurred subsequently, these last words which we have quoted from *Reuben Sachs* seem to have been inspired by some sinister presentiment, and to point to the frame of mind which rendered it possible for a young and lovely girl in the first flush of her genius and renown, to quit a life whose contrasts she found unbearable, and whose lesson too bitter for endurance.

THE UNFASHIONABLE ART OF ENGLAND.



NOW when it was too late I saw the folly of sitting down to build before counting the cost, said Robinson Crusoe on a certain memorable occasion, and the words come home to me to-day most painfully. For to write truly, frankly, and usefully of the Art of England to-day, many unpleasant things must be said or hinted, many deficiencies and errors dwelt upon which are habitually glossed over with flattering phrase, or allowed to linger in that kindly obscurity where they may almost pass for merits. There is, indeed, at the present time much that is rotten in the state of our Art, and in the conduct of those who are most intimately connected therewith, though upon this latter point I do not in this article propose to enter; and there is, to the best of my belief, no hope of reform whilst the present fashions of interested puffery, audacious advertisement, ignorant patronage, and ill-informed and partial criticism remain in force. For many years I have been to a considerable extent behind the scenes of the art world; the dealer, the patron, the artist, the critic have all been known to me, and I have watched the influence which one has exerted upon the other, and the extent to which that influence has been to the public advantage, or to the benefit of the art itself. Above all I have noted, with an increasing conviction of the harm which is done thereby both to the man and his work, the method in which fashion has of recent years determined not only the reward, but the direction of painting; and the result, easily to be predicted from the first, of the gradual disappearance of the older aims and qualities of English art in the endeavour of artists to satisfy this new, capricious, and exacting mistress, who, like a new Eve, has lately brought to many a poor painter, her golden forbidden fruit of luxury, notoriety, and self-indulgence.

The essence of Art is to be eternal, and the essence of Fashion is



THE SISTERS. — GEORGE PINWELL

to change. How can there be true alliance between these two? What has Fashion to do with that secluded inner country of the heart and spirit?—what even with that harvest of the quiet eye from and in which the power and the beauty of art proceed? What is right to-day, was wrong yesterday, and will be wrong again to-morrow: so says the *arbiter elegantiarum* in all ages. What is right to-day, was right yesterday, and will be right for ever: so speaks, and must always speak, the artist. What hope, then, can we have of obtaining a good art if it is to change daily in obedience to the dictates of the hour? And yet this is what English painting has been doing since the so-called art revival, and what it is doing more than ever to-day. And, blinded as we all are by the attractiveness of things which are new and progressive, and exactly in accordance not only with the taste of the moment but with the spirit of change which modifies all the thoughts and actions of this restless day, it is scarcely to be wondered at that ordinary picture-seers and the public at large do not notice the gradual disappearance from our pictures of what may be called their distinctively English peculiarities. For the change, it must be well remembered, is gradual, and we live in the midst of the current with little opportunity for pause and quiet examination.

We shall have in the later articles of this series occasion to consider at some length the various developments, methods, and manners which the influence of society and the increase of attention given to artistic concerns by the nation at large have brought into being; but in order to do this to the best advantage, it seems to me necessary in this preliminary article to speak a little about some phases of painting, and thought and life as expressed in painting, which were well known to our fathers, and which, in fact, gave to them all the pleasure which they derived from pictures. There is always some probability that the art which has gradually grown up in any given country, which has shaped itself as it were out of the needs and aspirations, prejudices and beliefs of the people, will have some real affinity with the national characteristics, will supply, in however partial a manner, some want which is felt on that particular portion of the earth and at that particular time. For national styles and methods of painting are merchandise which cannot be sent by Parcels Post, no matter how secure the package, which do not bear transportation, and to which, in a new sense, the old Latin proverb may be applied, *cælum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*. For not only the physical world, but its mental counterpart is different in France and England, Italy and Germany. The attempt to make an Englishman see after the same fashion as a Gaul, is hopeless, unless you can first make him feel in the Gallic spirit. The death of Art in all ages has been eclecticism; the attempt to combine all excellencies has always resulted in such works as were produced by the Bolognese

School, works essentially nugatory, and bearing the same relation to great art as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* bears to great literature.

Whatever is true about fine art, there is no doubt but that it always results from the desire to express primarily some *one* thing, not from the desire to express all things equally. The great artist is a man whose imagination is exceptionally aroused by this or that beauty of natural fact or spiritual consciousness. He is not a man who sets to work with the precision of a mathematical instrument, to work out a problem in colour and form. This is not to say that the artist never acts in the above manner; on the contrary, he does so habitually—it is a part of his business, of his artistic education. But all such work pertains only to the mechanics of his profession, and though perfection of technique will greatly increase his native artistic faculty, it is by no means the essential circumstance by which that faculty takes its rank. Extreme sensitiveness, whether of the mind or eye, may easily be injured by the attempt to force the eye to see or the mind to sympathise with sights, methods, or ideas which have for that special individual no attraction, nay, which are perhaps in themselves inconsistent with the exertion to the utmost of his individual power; and instances are by no means rare of artists who have, so to speak, educated themselves into sterility, and whose work, delightful despite its imperfection in youth, has become, with fuller accomplishment, uninteresting, colourless, and weak. And if this be the case with individuals, the theory is even more true when it has to be applied to nations, for all national arts have a peculiar idiosyncratic flavour, are all partizan speeches which can only be justified from one point of view.

The question may be asked why, even granting the above to be true, should it not be possible for the painters of one country to adopt without loss of power the discoveries, improvements, and even the habitual technical methods of another. The reason can only be briefly indicated here, for the inability depends not only on the education of the eye being different in every country of the world, but on the fact that, while the actual physical details seen by the eye are in themselves different in, say, England and France, all the mental prepossessions which help to make up our conscious sight are also various according to training and nationality. Thus the grass is not only of a different colour in France from that which it is in England, the whole effect of atmosphere greyer and cooler, but even if these things were the same they would not look so to a French and English eye. To which chief reason may be added that life is very short, and the acquirement of even one method of painting so supremely difficult, and the carrying out of that method in the special direction which any given painter may choose is a matter of

such long duration, and needs such single and undivided effort, that if the artist's time is taken up by the search for alien forms of practice and methods of interpretation, he is likely to find his whole attention absorbed in this formula-swallowing, and never to get any time to do his real business in the world, which is simply to express himself.

The more one knows of the history of art, and the more one studies the works of great artists, the more clearly we see that the latter are great, not because, but for the most part despite, of their methods. Of their methods, yes—and even of their materials. It hardly matters whether they work on paper or canvas, with chalk or brush, or pencil or pen and ink, whether they model in clay or carve their marble, or hammer iron into lace-work, as in the old days of Nuremberg and Verona; whether they put their fancies on tile or glass, or build them into mountains of stone, as in the days of Egypt, or carve them on the living rock amidst the jungles of India or Assyrian caves. Everywhere we find methods and materials varied and imperfect; everywhere, too, we find, save in work which has no interest, faults and deficiencies which the child of a future age can point out. But everywhere, too, we discover the universal truth of this law, that the artistic spirit is greater than any imperfection of form, or any deficiency of knowledge, so that if your Michael Angelo knew so little about anatomy as to give his statues any imaginable disproportion, the work would still maintain its hold upon us so long as he communicated to it that strenuousness of spirit, that power, grandeur, and impressiveness which are inseparably linked with his name. This is no mere theory, but actual indisputable fact; and can be proved as such by a thousand instances. We have all heard of Michael Angelo's *David*, and how the lack of proportion therein (for the head and torso are far too large for the lower limbs), was caused by the sculptor's haste. He is said to have set to work without measurement on an enormous block of marble, and in his haste to have made the upper portion of the body on so large a scale that the block was of insufficient size to complete the statue in due proportion. It is rather a pleasant story this of the big sculptor chipping away with all the eagerness of an art student, but the point of it in regard to our argument is that, despite the manifest error, the statue remains to this day of undisputed magnificence as a work of art. In the same way a nation's art may be more perfect in imperfection than in excellence, if it possesses the essential qualities of the nation's life. And it is because our art is in some measure losing these qualities that I want to say a word in favour of a few of those older painters who, whatever may be thought of the range of their knowledge and the value of their achievements, were indisputably English in feeling, in the character of their subjects, and whose methods grew

up slowly, tentatively, it may even be stupidly, bit by bit, in harmony with the life of their countrymen, and in harmony with the traditions of English workmanship. They did not talk much about their work, these men: I seem to fancy they did not even think very much about it: and as to knowledge of the history of painting, a student at Girton nowadays might easily have puzzled the whole generation. But that they *felt it* there is now their work to witness; and that is, after all, as Paul Bedford used to say, "the apparatus which can't lie."

We have at the present time a very beautiful National Gallery, where the works of these men may for the most part *not* be seen; and in the cellars thereof, lit by what little light Sir Frederick Burton and the London fog allow, there exist some two or three hundred landscapes by a gentleman called Turner, who in a moment of misguided liberality thought that the nation might like to look at them, which are without question the finest collection of water-colour drawings by a single artist in the whole world, and which will one day be perhaps given their right place in the building above them. Meantime just consider how ludicrous a thing it is for us to go strutting and fretting about our art progress, to spend thousands upon thousands in the purchase of old Italian pictures which not one in a million Englishmen cares to look at, while we cannot even see—not even those of us who are paid a thousand a year on the understanding that they have the capacity of seeing—that it is a national disgrace to let the masterpieces of the greatest English painter, living or dead, moulder away in a half-lighted cellar. Italian art, forsooth! Yes, it is a fine thing if you can understand the beauty thereof, and let those who can give their £70,000 for a Raphael, or £10,000 for a Rubens; but what are those works doing in a National Gallery which is not large enough to hold our own people if we had but the sense to hang them there?

Just think what this means; just think what real consideration for Art it shows; just think what likelihood there is of the painters of any country making real progress and receiving real encouragement to do their utmost in the highest forms of art, when they know that neither in life nor death will their country recognise their efforts, and that, however famous they may become, they will have but small, if any, place upon those walls which should be chiefly their own.

The one branch of painting which is exclusively English is that of water-colour. In this branch there have been executed works of such beauty and such breadth of achievement that they form, I do not hesitate to say, the greatest advance which has been made in pictorial art since the days of the Italian Renaissance. The land-

scapes of Cox, Turner, and De Wint, of Bonington, Muller, and George Barret, Copley Fielding and Nasmyth, of Varley and James Holland and Samuel Palmer, the figure and architectural drawings of Prout, and old William Hunt, and John Lewis, and Sir John Gilbert, ay, and even work executed by Sir Frederick Burton himself in his earlier days, form a series of pictures which, in respect of quality, are to the best of my belief not to be paralleled in the history of painting.

And yet, incredible as it may seem, there is no place found for water-colours in our National Gallery ; they are not even admitted (above the basement) as elements in the collection ; for all that the visitor to this exhibition sees, the English nation might never have boasted of the above-mentioned artists. And if we turn from our great national exhibition of the work of deceased artists, to our great national exhibition of the works of living ones, we shall find the same policy pursued with but little modification. For while oil-pictures are hung there in a dozen large galleries, there is but one small side-room set apart for the display of water-colours ; and of those which are there hung, the majority are not the works of our best artists in this medium, but of the second- and third-rate. The policy of the Royal Academy towards water-colour has been so notorious that nowadays the men who are masters in this branch of painting will not submit their works to be treated with the lack of consideration which is invariably shown to them. So in the National Gallery and Royal Academy alike there is no representation of the one branch of art which first arose and grew to final perfection on English soil ; and while this is so, and is known to be so, there is no one who cares to raise his voice in protest, or to suggest that we owe to the work of the great water-colour painters and the honour of water-colour art a deep debt of gratitude and recognition.

Now such neglect and injustice as I have described above do not come to pass without producing injurious effects upon the taste of the nation, upon the quality of its art workmanship, and upon the *bona fides* of its artists ; and from those effects we are suffering to-day. We have chosen to neglect that work which was distinctively English ; we have allowed the old school of water-colour to sink day by day to the level of a forgotten art, and we have as a nation taken no pains to cherish the masterpieces which have been produced therein, and to hold them up to our younger painters for example and encouragement. We have deified oil-painting at the expense of more delicate medium colour, and, by that strange irony of fate which so often mars our calculations, the result of our action has been not only to depress the art which we neglected, but to drag down with it that which we exalted.

Landscape painting in England rose with the rise of water-colour,

and with the fall of water-colour it is falling. Where forty years ago we had a dozen great landscape artists, for the most part painters in the last-mentioned medium, there is not now one *great* English landscape painter either in water-colour or oil. Unpalatable truth, but truth all the same. Let us recognise it, for till we do so there is no hope of remedy.

Most unfortunately I cannot put the actual works of which I am speaking into the pages of this review, for could I do so my words would need little confirmation. But I would ask those readers who think that I have exaggerated the excellence of the last generation of English landscape painters, and unduly depreciated the merit of contemporary work, to go for themselves to the South Kensington Museum, and to (the cellars of) the National Gallery, and look at the Coxes, De Wints, Barrets, and Palmers which they will find at the former place, and at the Turners in the latter.

Now note that while water-colour landscape flourished, the oil-painting which ran side by side with it not only flourished also, but maintained in its own medium, though perhaps not to an equal extent, the very qualities which gave the peculiar charm to water-colour. These were chiefly the qualities of transparency, delicacy, freshness of impression, and one last crowning merit, extremely difficult to define briefly, but which I may be perhaps allowed to call the impromptu quality: the quality, that is, which produces the impression of the painting having been done with ease and certainty. If there is one thing more than another peculiar to English landscapes of the great school, it is this, that their artists seem to have had no slightest doubt as to the attractiveness of whatever they chose to paint. Some of them chose to paint classical landscapes out of their head, like George Barret, and most extraordinary productions they were, viewed from any standpoint of reason; but Barret painted away at them all his life, apparently with the calmest satisfaction; and he was so true an artist at heart, and had such a keen insight into beautiful things, and had so real a devotion towards one or two natural facts—as, for instance, the delicate gradations of atmosphere, and the all-pervading influence of sunlight—that he managed to make even his most impossible temples and imaginary landscapes, in one sense real, and in all senses beautiful. Some others, and these a great many, simply went out to the nearest field or common—and there were plenty of fields and commons in England fifty years ago—and took the first piece of scrubby gorse, or gravel pit, or ragged hedgerow which they chanced to find, and with that and a few sheep and wide expanse of tumbled clouds they made their pictures. It is true that they made *pictures*: they did not *think* of making them as much as we do nowadays, and their

scientific and historic knowledge was of course infinitely less; nor do I altogether believe that, with two or three notable exceptions, they were naturally greater artists than those we have amongst us to-day, but they were artists working more *sincerely* than the majority of modern painters. They were less influenced by the desire of making large incomes, they were less cramped by the necessity of meeting each vagary of the ever-shifting taste of the moment. Above all, they were not men who had learnt to think very much of their own performances, and whose art had consequently suffered.

Some years ago there were two water-colours by David Cox sold at Christie's, which fetched between them—I forget the exact figures—but about four thousand two hundred guineas. And concerning one of these pictures there was a little history which happens to have come into my hands. It seems that when it was first purchased from Cox he had asked and obtained for the drawing (it was a very large water-colour) the enormous sum of £80; and he had been so greatly distressed on thinking the matter over lest the purchaser should not have received good value for his money, that he wrote to him, and after thanking him greatly for his generosity, added at the end of his letter that he took the liberty of sending him another small sketch to make up the value of the money he had received. We happen to have this letter, and I must confess that it seems to me to be one of those simple, honourable, kindly acts of which it would not be a bad thing if we still kept up the tradition. It points too a tremendous moral, for the frame of mind in which Cox wrote and sent that letter and sketch, has in the artistic world perished to-day as utterly as if it had never existed. The modern point of view is exactly the reverse: a painter nowadays *never gets enough* for his work (in his own opinion), and if he be a popular artist, he too frequently even approaches his purchaser in what may be called the auctioneer spirit, offering his work first of all for a price which he knows it is not worth, and which he scarcely even hopes to get, on the chance, as was once said to me, of finding a flat. And then if the picture be not sold, as it generally is not, at the first-named price, the sum asked is two-thirds, then half, then probably a quarter. And finally, if none of these values are sufficiently attractive to the purchaser, sooner or later the work finds its way to Christie's sale-room, and is then sold, roughly speaking, for its actual value. And as far as my experience goes, this value averages, except in the case of a few of the very best men, from a quarter to a sixth of the price at which the artist would first have estimated his work.

There is little progress that we can perceive in such a state of things, and it is very questionable whether the artist is really any better off for fluking £500 or £1000 now and again for a picture

which is worth £50, and raising his expenditure, as he invariably does, on the assumption that the fluke will be perpetual. In the old days if he only got £30 or £40, he only lived at the rate of £300 or £400 per annum, and he lived the life which was best suited to his nature, and best suited to make him capable of producing pictures.

Again, the majority of people hardly understand the various ways in which this influence of fashion works to the deterioration of art. Consider for a moment the case of a landscape painter who is at the present time fashionable, and receiving large prices for his pictures. He must not only have a large house in some expensive neighbourhood, and entertain therein, but he must also be "seen about" as the phrase is, in order to maintain his vogue. Where Society goes, he must go also, and at the same time; and in order to sell for those large sums of money he must appeal to a very limited class, and a class who are accustomed to have all their conventions and prejudices consulted to the utmost possible degree; moreover, to a class who for the most part lead artificial, unwholesome *town* lives, and whose predilections therefore are likely to be for unwholesome artificial *town* art. The simplicity of subject which marked the earlier painting of which I have been speaking, would have little attraction for the fashionable picture buyer, either then or now, and, since the painter now bows to Society, to the fashionable picture buyer he *must* appeal. What do we find? Look round the Royal Academy and say how many pictures there are in which a plain, simple English sentiment has been the motive of the artist's work; and then look round and compare with the few you have been able to discover, the multitudinous representations in which artificiality, either of dress or sentiment, plays the chief part.

Look at this picture by Mr. G. D. Leslie for an example of that older, quieter, truer, and essentially more beautiful style and sentiment which used to mark the majority of our pictures even when they were, technically speaking, most awkward, most imperfect, and most uninteresting. Life to these two girls, who have opened the window to enjoy the sunshine and the fresh air, may not be intensely exciting, may be full of rather narrow, uneventful pleasures and pain; but is it possible to look, and not think of them as fresh and clean, physically and spiritually, not to be glad that they have a quiet time, not to envy a little their youth and innocence and the pleasant natural surroundings of their lives? It seems to me to matter here very little whether in this Mr. Leslie has or has not idealised his facts. Perhaps even the more honour to him if he has done so; for it is no small honour for a man to have so pure a conception of English maidenhood, and a touch at once so gentle, so firm, and so loving upon the little everyday incidents of English life.



HOME. — G. D. LESLIE. R. A.

Yes! struggle as hard as we may, each of us is bound to remain, like Mr. Gilbert's self-righteous hero, an "Englishman," temptations to belong to other nations notwithstanding. And so why should not our art be as essentially English as ourselves? Indeed it must be, if we hide it with as many fanciful foreign clothes as it takes to make Mr. Beerbohm Tree into Sir John Falstaff. And as in that clever personation, the clothes will never seem to quite belong to the body, but be carried about by it more or less uneasily.

Perhaps the great secret of Sir John Millais' popularity lies in his recognition, possibly his unconscious recognition, of the above. His pictures have, beyond and above all other qualities, this English quality, and they appeal to all classes for that very reason. A sort of personal affection for this painter, as well as for his pictures, obtains with very many people who have never set eyes upon him; he is in touch with them mentally and spiritually, and his little maidens with bird's-nests and brooms, spiders, violets, or caller-herrin', by whatever fanciful name they may be called, please from their purely human quality even more than by their skill. And at an early period of his career Sir John Millais, then little more than a boy, did a large number of drawings for the illustration of Anthony Trollope's novels, which not only showed him at his very best, but remain to this day the most perfect presentment which has ever been given by art of the character and the appearance, and what may be called the *local colour*, of England and the English people. Doubtless some of this achievement was owing to the nature of the stories illustrated (*Framley Parsonage*, *Orley Farm*, and *The Small House at Allington*), and the perfect reciprocity of feeling between the artist and the author, but when all this is allowed for, the perfect kindliness, grace, simplicity, and strength of these drawings are most admirable. The extent to which they reflect that decency of ordered life, that modesty of demeanour, that fearless purity and absolute innocence which are, or at least were, the ideals of English girlhood, is almost beyond belief; and if we pass from the mental and moral aspect of the drawings to their technical qualities, we find a most fitting correspondence between the means employed and the effect produced. The execution is extremely simple and straightforward; the whole attempt is to give the very kernel of the selected incident; the representation of the scene seems to have been the only idea in the artist's mind. And with this singleness of intention there has come—how, who shall say?—such grace of gesture, such dignity of form, such appropriateness and delicacy of hinted or wrought-out detail, as would be hard to parallel, impossible to surpass. Lily Dale and Lucy Robarts are no dearer and sweeter in Trollope's printed pages, than as Millais has shown them us in the old garden at Allington

or in the "Framley Parsonage"; and as for Johnnie Eames and Crosbie, without the painter's help their characters would be but half understood.

Mr. Luke Fildes is another artist who, though in a far inferior degree to Sir John Millais, showed a similar capacity in illustration, and the spirit of whose painting has remained wholly national. His Venetian women, of whom he paints so many, are transparently of British origin, and wear their coloured robes fresh from a laundress in the Euston Road. They are far too clean, too buxom, too fresh and unsophisticated for the Venetian flower-girls they represent, and suggest the character of such women even less than they reproduce their exterior. If we want a Venetian subject-picture which shall be veritable, we must get Van Haanen or some other foreigner to paint it for us, or be content with merest caricature of reality.

It is strange, however, to notice how strongly our æsthetic ideas are setting nowadays in the direction of the reproduction of foreign methods, subjects, and ideas. An awful horror of being thought British, seems to have seized upon our artists, and with the exception of that large class who confine their efforts to the nursery, and the denizens thereof, I can hardly remember one popular Academician who does not seek either his subjects, or his method of treating them, across the sea. Look, for instance, at Mr. Marcus Stone, who one would think should be national enough if he gave his idiosyncrasies fair play. He paints us English lovers in English gardens, but he does it in such a way, with such accessories of big hats and feathers, Empire dresses, painted furniture, and general *bric-à-brac*, as to render his compositions akin to an opera bouffe. Then there is Mr. Phil Morris, who is patriotic enough at heart, and has in bygone days done many deliciously dreamy pictures of idealised rustic life, but who now has become so entirely fascinated by the clothes which people, and especially babies, wear, that he almost forgets there is any kind of humanity beneath them. Mr. Orchardson has an excuse, for he is, if I mistake not, half a Frenchman by birth, but even he has given up to furniture and architecture a good deal of what was meant for mankind, and will only allow us now and then to perceive how great is his power of depicting human feeling.

As a little contrast to this art of the rich, look at the picture by the late Paul Falconer Poole, R.A., of *The Sisters*.¹ In it three qualities speak for themselves—simplicity, grace, and naturalness; but though all the facts of the scene are here rendered truly and clearly, yet the work has besides these merits a touch of style which quite justifies it as a work of art; and it is just this last-mentioned quality which is gradually disappearing from English

¹ On the opposite page.

painting. Our artists are getting into a habit of dull realism with regard to the outside of the matters with which their pictures are concerned, and seem to think that if only technical qualities are sufficiently thorough, all else can be dispensed with. Composition, too, is growing day by day more rare; the pre-Raphaelites unconsciously struck it a hard blow in their search for certain essential qualities which they thought the attention given to composition had tended to obscure; and the influence of the later French art, and its devotees of value and impressionism, has helped to complete the work. A few men like Sir Frederick Leighton and Mr. Orchardson still make a study of composition, but, for the most part, it has ceased to be cared for or greatly sought, and no small proportion of the decrease of dignity and interest which is notable in English painting at the present time is due to this fact.

Yet it may be doubted whether great landscape painting is possible without the element of composition entering very largely into the scheme of the painter. Certainly no great landscape art in England has as yet existed which did not depend almost mainly upon this quality. And it would be interesting to show, though I have no space here for such a demonstration, how large a share is played by this characteristic in the most apparently simple works of Cox and De Wint. Cox especially was a great master in the art of composing landscape; and there is a large and elaborate water-colour of his, of "*Æneas approaching Carthage*," which is as elaborate in this respect as Turner's more famous picture in the National Gallery.¹ Indeed, at one period there is no doubt that Cox studied most carefully not only Turner but Claude, and gained from his acquaintance with the latter much of his power in delineating those calm and sunny scenes and atmospheres, which at first sight come as a surprise to those who only know the rough winds and rainy skies of his usual work. A good example of the part rightly played by composition in a landscape is to be found in the sea-coast scenes by Richard Bonington, and still better ones in the classical landscapes of Richard Wilson and George Barret. This last is indeed the most conventional of all our older water-colour painters; but he is also one of the most delightful: this sounds a paradox, but is nevertheless true.

On one last point there is a marked change in the oil-painting of the present day as compared with that of the earlier half of the century, and that is in the absence of finish, in the incompleteness of the work offered to the public. Painting (the actual brushwork) has become altogether more hurried, more slap-dash, more incomplete. It is no uncommon thing to find even in an Academy picture, portions

¹ "*Dido building Carthage*."

of the composition left in entirely different states as regards the actual handling of the paint: you may even notice portions which have not been painted at all. No doubt there are several reasons for this, which, to some extent, excuse the alteration: we live in an age of competition and hurry; and we paint at the highest of high pressure; and if painters fare more luxuriously than of old, they must do their work as quickly as may be; and if it is sufficiently good to look well in the exhibition and to please the patron, there must be a great temptation to carry it no farther. But still, making all allowances for our different civilisation, we might fairly expect a greater proportion of completed work from our most popular painters than we get just now. And it surely should be some inducement to them to give us such work if they consider that not only have all the great masters of former times given it ungrudgingly, but that even in our own experience, the paintings on which such labour has been bestowed, have brought most enduring fame to their artists, and so from even the rough standpoint of pecuniary value the labour has been by no means wasted. Finish, rightly understood, is not only a grace, but a necessity in a picture. No incomplete thing is really a work of art, if its incompletion has arisen from the artist's choice.¹

It is difficult to speak on this subject without being misunderstood. A just-begun sketch might perhaps be called incomplete, and yet be wholly free from the deficiency to which I am alluding. And an unfinished picture no doubt may be a work of art as far as it goes. But the point is this—that the master who deliberately refuses to give to one portion of his composition the work which is necessary to bring it into entire harmony and consistency with the rest, is deliberately falling short of that implied contract which he has made, if I may use the expression, with both nature and public. His acquired and instinctive knowledge say to him this scene, or this man, should be represented in such and such a way; and if, knowing that, he only chooses to partially so represent him, he has committed an irredeemable sin, has forfeited his birthright as an artist, and has betrayed the trust of the public. And mind this: he has betrayed it the more, in proportion as he is a great and popular artist. For to such men we come day after day, our minds full of business, our eyes full of ugliness, and our hearts full of worries, and we ask them silently but sincerely to make us forget the business, to substitute beauty for the ugliness, and to quiet the worries with whatsoever things they have found or thought to be of noble meaning or lovely sight. And we trust them to do this to the utmost of their power, and we pay them and honour them because we believe they can and will do it. We, so to speak, are not on our guard with them; but they are on their parole with us; and very many of them certainly

¹ Unless the incompletion is part of the artist's *meaning*, as *par exemple* in a sketch.

keep their implied contract most thoroughly and loyally. I am proud to say that I know several painters, men of extremely moderate income, almost if not entirely dependent upon the sale of their work, whose chief anxiety is that the picture should be as good as they can make it, and who think of that first, and that only, till it is finished.

I know a great painter, perhaps the greatest now living in England, whom I found one day at work on a small canvas of a girl's head. It seemed to me the picture (it was a portrait) was one of the most beautiful heads that I had ever seen, and I expressed this opinion with tolerable frankness; but the artist's reply rather startled me. After thanking me for my courtesy, he said: "I am glad you like the head, but it's not right, and what's more, I'm just going to take it out; I can't get the eyes right." I asked him what he meant, and his answer was to the effect that he had had the head in and out five times, and couldn't get the colour of the girl's eyes to his satisfaction, and so was going to give up the portrait. And consequently give it up he did, to the best of my belief. At all events the picture was never exhibited, and I am almost certain never sold.¹

To those who know what is implied in the above incident it will not seem a little thing that a great painter should nowadays so frankly confess and struggle so hard to remedy his failure, and should finally accept defeat, rather than give to the world what he knew or believed to be wrong. And I shall not have written this chapter altogether in vain if I can persuade some of those folk who have much money to spend upon works of art, to spend it chiefly upon such as evidence this desire of perfection; for, believe me in this, if you doubt all else in the present paper, that only in such a spirit is fine artistic work produced. You cannot inspire fine painting by money, you cannot produce it for money; and you can only encourage it by love and sympathy, and it can only be produced by the man who puts his whole heart and mind and strength into each portion of his work.

As some illustration of a painter who did this, look at the picture by Mr. Lewis which faces the preceding page, and think of how impossible it would be that such labour as has been spent thereon should ever be actually paid for in hard cash. The work has been done in such fashion because that was the only way in which the artist found it possible to carry out all he saw; and he has been profoundly indifferent to the fact that he might have saved himself, in this or that detail, so much unremunerated labour. Why, the very patterning of the maid's shawl in the picture from which this reproduction has been made, is a miracle of patient industry, needing the use of a lens

¹ Years afterwards I saw it in his studio.

to appreciate ; and a result which, to nine hundred and ninety-nine people out of every thousand, would have been equivalent, might have been obtained in that portion of the composition for a tithe of the labour. Of course there is no necessity for finish to be of this missal-painting kind ; I take it only as an extreme instance of conscientiousness in work. For the lack of this conscientiousness is the besetting sin of modern English painting ; at least of that portion which is nowadays most popular. The elaborate, delicate, dignified work of our earlier landscapists, has been succeeded by roughly effective sketches, such as those of the Scotch school, or by conventionally-finished studio paintings, such as those of Mr. Leader, or by elaborate, but uninformative realistic renderings of nature, which have no real pretensions to be called pictures ; and the solidity and finish of the handiwork itself have to a great extent disappeared.

The remedy is difficult, and at the present time probably impossible : it is to be found for the artistic workman in a return to a healthier character of life, in the forgetting of the patron and the Queen Anne palace, for whom and in which, the painter has lived of late, and the return to the two natures from which all the beauty of art has ever sprung—the inner nature of the heart and mind, and the outer nature of the visible physical world. Not in dress, not in drama, not in imitation of this or that passing fashion ; not in seeking to please any special class, or in seeking to delineate any special kind of subject, is his salvation to be found ; but in opening the mind and eye to the truths which he alone can discover, the beauties which he alone can feel, and the real pathos and interest of that drama of life which has gone on since the world began.



MADONNA

PERUGINO

In the possession of the author

Dans cette étude, nous avons voulu aussi et principalement évoquer une Ville, la Ville comme un personnage essentiel, associé aux états d'âme, qui conseille, dissuade, détermine à agir.

Ainsi dans la réalité, cette Bruges, qu'il nous a plu d'élire, apparaît presque humaine. . . . Un ascendant s'établit d'elle sur ceux qui y séjournent.

Elle les façonne selon ses sites et ses cloches. . . .

(J'espère) que ceux qui nous liront subissent aussi la présence et l'influence de la Ville, éprouvent la contagion des eaux mieux voisines, sentent à leur tour l'ombre des hautes tours allongée sur le texte.

LIFE, ART, AND NATURE IN AN OLD-WORLD CITY.



WHILE I was revising the article which follows a few days ago, I came across a little book recently published, called *Bruges la Morte*,¹ and in the preface were the above words. They phrase so exactly the feeling which I attempted to embody long since in the following article: the feeling which possessed me most strongly during the months I spent in the Dead City, that I have placed them as a sort of motto or keynote at the head of the paper, that if the notes which follow are a little flat, I may at least have the pleasure of referring my readers to a pleasant author and an interesting *étude passionnelle*.—H. Q. 1892.

The first day in Bruges is apt to be a trial. The monotony of this half-deserted Gothic town is of a more than ordinarily depressing quality, and the effect of the angular roofs and windows wearying to the eye as the diagrams of a book of Euclid. The low-browed shops, the irregularly-paved streets, the dull, unrelieved brown and grey of the houses, add to the dreary effect. "The old houses are very interesting," says Mr. Baedeker; but they are not, to use an expressive Americanism, "gay." After an hour or two, one takes them, and their staircased gables, grimly, almost as a necessary

¹ *Bruges la Morte*, par Georges Rodenbach. Marpon et Flammarion, Paris.

evil; and morbidly wonders how such an impracticable architecture ever came to be generally adopted. The little restaurants, too, with their doorless doorways, their deserted rooms and sanded floors, are hardly inviting; and as the grey evening closes in, and the over-tall belfry tower grows indistinct behind a veil of dull rain, the forlorn impression deepens, and the stranger thinks that his Philistine companion, who elected to sleep at Brussels, was not so wrong after all. The ordinary tourist, indeed, rarely lingers here, and takes away with him few impressions but those of narrow crooked streets, tall houses thrusting jagged step-like gables against the sky—cobble-stone pavements, which hurt his feet and disturb his equanimity—and smells of an intensity and variety rarely equalled even in Venice.

The sights of Bruges have chiefly the peculiarity of unobtrusiveness. The few good pictures are hidden in out-of-the-way corners; the finer examples of Gothic architecture are in by-streets; and the churches are big and bare, and for the most part badly decorated. Indeed, these last are painted (it was done in the earlier half of the present century) with what Mr. Baedeker calls "polychromatic ornament," which sits with uneasy smartness on their pointed arches and gaunt stone pillars, as out of place as a bit of Liberty silk cast upon some old Crusader's tomb. So, unless the tourist be of the School Board kind, an architectural student, or a mediæval statistician, he shakes the dust of Bruges off his feet without regret, and rarely if ever returns. We must be really fond of art to take it in such concentrated, ungilded doses, amidst such dusky surroundings. And yet apart from the pictures and architecture, if one gives this town a little time, wanders about the streets without a guide-book, and allows the old-world city, so to speak, to tell its own tale in its own way, the place has a distinct charm. Not to mention the paintings, of which more hereafter, the atmosphere of the town itself soon grows delightful. The little sturdy brown houses of the poorer quarters, with their irrelevant gables, and heavy woodwork carved quaintly here and there, and the dark interiors lit up only by a gleam of light upon some brass or copper water-jug or saucepan; the rows of old women lace-making, each in her long black cloak and neat cap; and the long curling canals which wind in and out amongst the streets, have all a pleasant flavour of strangeness and interest. One soon learns to lounge on the parapets of the frequent bridges, to get continual if slight pleasure from noting the reflection of some bright mass of flowers in the dull water, or trace with languid interest the blackened carving of an arch or gable.

Even amongst the pictures themselves there is a quiet satisfaction to be gained, such as could hardly be found amidst the long luxury of the Uffizi or Pitti galleries, or the cold corridors and chapels of the

Vatican. It is nice to enter a grim, sparsely-windowed house, and passing by the deaf custode up a rough stone staircase, to come upon a small vaulted apartment not much bigger than an ordinary bathroom, and find one of the finest Van Eycks in the world hanging there in an execrably bad light, and in a dirty old frame that Mr. Agnew would not think fit to put on an oleograph. It shows that art is not altogether devoted to the indolent pleasures of the rich, to find pictures like this, which are of their kind inimitable, hung in obscure corners of church, gallery, or hospital in their native place, having been done evidently with little thought of public recognition, and little desire of personal reward; and it is pleasant to think that these stolid Flemish citizens and peasants have been able to find, since the first days of their national life, whatever comfort or delight they could gain from pictures or statues, *in records of their own people, done by their own artists.*¹ We see with pleasure when we look at the St. Johns, and St. Matthews, the Virgin Maries and Magdalenes of the great Flemish painters, that they are simply portraits of the peasants or citizens one might meet to-day in the Flemish fields or streets. These Virgins, with the big broad rounded foreheads, and small full-lidded eyes, with tall solid figures stiff in gesture, and placid homely faces; who sit upon their thrones as a poor tenant might sit on the verge of a chair in the Squire's drawing-room—are but the women that we see everywhere on the market-days at Bruges, walking in from the surrounding country in their heavy black cloth cloaks, and narrow-bordered muslin caps. A strong, tall, and as a rule good-looking race are they, though their beauty is of a stern, thoughtful kind; and their deep grey or dark brown eyes are little troubled with modern fretfulness or speculation. Conceive the very antitype of the brisk bustling French townswoman—and it will not be far removed from a picture of the "*Flamande*," with her slow movements, her ox-eyed gaze, her patience, her phlegm, and her massive physique. It is no uncommon sight to see one of these young women towing a large two-masted barge up to Bruges from Sluys or Ostend, while her husband or father stands contemplatively at the tiller, and smokes his big china pipe with great enjoyment. One day indeed, as I was sitting sketching outside the town, there came a bigger barge than usual, with the whole female side of the family for three generations engaged in towing it. The grandmother, the mother, two daughters, and a fifth woman, who must I think have been the Dutch substitute for a general servant; all harnessed abreast, all bent double with the strain of the ropes; while behind them the great boat deeply laden with coal moved gently forward, and the big father smoked his pipe in dignified ease, steering indolently with his foot. Such a sight as this gives a shock to English notions at first, but on the whole the

¹ The old secret of art: the thing which "lies nearest."

Flemish peasant women look happier than peasant women do with us, and though the poverty in Bruges and the surrounding country is both deep and widespread, it does not seem to be of that grinding kind, or to produce the same amount of misery as its English equivalent.

We have wandered away from the painters, in order to give some notion of the people who form the subject of their paintings; for Van Eyck, or Memling, or any other of the great Flemish painters, did not care for theories in their art, but for facts. They picked up their St. Johns at the post-office or the bowling-green, and they stuck them bodily into their pictures, in gorgeous robes, but with no other alteration, and in every composition quaint little details and domesticities of urban or rural life peep out in enthroned Virgin and martyred St. Ursula, to find any parallel with which in Italian painting one has to go back to its very earliest days, to the time of Giotto and his followers.

The Northerners, in fact, used their art in a totally different fashion from the Southern nations. They made of it a *broom* rather than a *banner*; it was for use rather than for display. In the finest period of Italian art there is little trace of this intimate relationship between the painter and the everyday domestic life of his time, which is the very keynote of all Flemish painting.¹ Even as far back as the days of Giotto, the simplicity of the Italian was not only inferior in degree, but totally different in kind, to that of the Fleming. For Giotto and the Giottesci, and indeed, speaking broadly, all the pre-Raphaelite painters, strove to be simple, if we may use such an expression, of malice prepense. Their simplicity was less a national quality than a revolt against the strained tradition which had been bequeathed to them by Byzantium. But in the early Flemish work the simplicity is wholly unconscious, it depends entirely upon the painter's inability to conceive his art in any other terms than those in which he conceived his life. Intellectually a limited people, and emotionally a restricted one, the Flemings held fast, with a devotion that was intense in proportion to the scantiness of its material, to the facts which they saw around them, and the truths which they comprehended.

The best Van Eyck in Bruges, and the picture which has been chiefly in my mind whilst writing the above, is an "Enthronement of the Virgin,"—with a saint on one side, of course, and a priest on the other. The saint, though a magnificent piece of painting, is not specially interesting; and the Virgin herself differs little from the usual mild-mannered lady who is generally cast for this part in Flemish pictures. But the priest is an important personage, of as

¹ Let me not be misunderstood to mean that there was no trace of relationship between the *social* life and the Italian painter's art: but the ordinary everyday domestic life which the Fleming depicted and cared for, we do not find in the art of Italy.

marked an individuality as a Dickens character; and becomes almost a personal friend to those who pay two or three visits to the picture. He is a stout, curiously-wrinkled, flabby-faced man, with a bald head and a triple chin, small pig-like eyes half opened, and heavy pendulous cheeks. Good humour, good living, and a little cunning self-interest, have puckered and wrinkled his face into a thousand creases; and he has just got into his splendidly-embroidered robe of office, and is doing his devotion with a sort of perfunctory air, such as one may see to this day in any of the Bruges churches. A wonderful piece of Zola-like painting, no less admirable for its characterisation, than for the magnificence of its technique.

There are some Memlings, too, at the Academy, but they are not so good as the celebrated ones in the Hospital of Saint John; about which, too, there is a pleasant story, which has probably been proved untrue by some German archæologist, telling how Memling painted them in return for the care with which the Sisters had nursed him in their hospital. The "Chasse de Saint Ursule," as the cabinet containing them is called, contains a series of eight panels, painted in a small carved shrine, which I suppose holds some relic of the holy St. Ursula. These paintings are very marvellous in several respects, especially in the grouping of masses of figures, each wrought with the utmost intricacy of detail, and with an apparent power in the painter of realising the utmost minutiae, even in scenes where he must really have worked from imagination. The colour is when compared with the colour of Van Eyck rather of the missal-painting order, though of its kind singularly beautiful, having a clear richness of quality like that of a darkened Fra Angelico. But the great pleasure of the series to most people will undoubtedly lie in the marvellous rendering of character and expression in the various faces, on a scale so minute as to seem almost incredible. To my thinking, the religious element is in these works almost entirely wanting; at all events, the pleasure which they give is in no way dependent on that sentiment, and in this respect the contrast between Memling and the early Italian painters is very remarkable. However, even plate-spinning, when it is carried to a certain extent, gives intense satisfaction; and surely no plate-spinning in the world was ever so dexterous as this handling of Johannes Memling's. All round the room in which this wonderful shrine is kept, there is hung a quaint collection of early Flemish pictures, which will well repay examination, but of which I cannot here speak in detail; for there was a pompous official on the day I visited the gallery who shouldered every one round the room, much as one has seen a collie hustle a flock of sheep through a gate. He was not nice, this man, though he wore a shiny black dress-suit and the blue-and-white scarf of office, and was, I believe, laid on by the hospital

sisterhood for this occasion only ; for it was one of the festivals on which the hospital was open to the general public. The house itself is a long, rambling edifice, standing in a narrow street over against the Church of Notre Dame, and entered by a low-browed circular archway, with a finely-carved and dimly-coloured wooden statuette of some bygone bishop in a niche above the keystone of the arch. On the other side of the roadway, against the wall of the church, rises a very realistic pieta, with kneeling figures of the Virgin and St. John, and a heap of earth at the foot of the cross with a couple of skulls on it. The whole of this erection—which was done, or at least restored, somewhere about the beginning of this century—is an eyesore, the only one of its kind in Bruges : it presents a very repulsive combination of tawdriness, vulgarity, and make-believe religion ; and if the old bishop who looks down upon it across the street could have his way, I am sure that gilt pastoral staff of his would be used to some purpose.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is only remarkable as an architectural curiosity, being an exact imitation in every detail of the original church of that name at Jerusalem. It was built about two hundred years ago by a pious layman, who undertook two separate pilgrimages to the Holy Land in order to carry out the scheme on which he had set his heart, and to ensure the correctness of each detail of the reproduction. I am ashamed to say this edifice did not interest me in the slightest degree, but I have not the strength of mind to omit it altogether, lest the disciples of Baedeker should turn and rend me.

In the Palais de Justice the great attraction is a wonderfully-carved mantelpiece, containing numerous panels with illustrations of Scriptural scenes, garlands of flowers, statuettes, coats-of-arms, etc., and this too is more curious than beautiful ; admirable, like so many of these old-world decorative objects, chiefly for the long patience of its originator, and the evident enthusiasm with which he has done his work. There is an interesting and tragic story connected with its execution, something to the following effect :

There were two wood-carvers in Bruges, of whom the inferior was jealous of his rival, and succeeded, by means of false witnesses, in getting him condemned to death by the town council for the murder of a relation. But the council, being anxious to get the services of this great wood-carver for nothing, adjourned the execution of the sentence for a year, till he should have finished the great mantelpiece in the town hall ; so he went to work every day in the Palais de Justice, and was led back to his dungeon in the evening. Towards the close of the time his innocence came



VENICE.— CLARA MONTALBA

out, and was conclusively established. Wherefore, on the morning after the mantelpiece was completed, the council came in state to tell him that he was free—and found him in his dungeon, dead.

Thus runs the legend.

But neither the mantelpiece, nor the Memlings, nor the architecture of Bruges, are the matters for which those who dwell within the city walls care the most. The great feature of the place is undoubtedly the canals, which in places are vividly reminiscent of Venice. There is a curious double circle of these round the town, the outer of which affords as pleasant a walk as could well be conceived. Imagine a long, continually-changing curve of water, bordered by tall ash and poplar trees, and dotted at irregular intervals with great grey stone gates, generally in the form of a large double tower and archway between, through which one catches sight of a street leading to the interior of the town. Imagine continual windmills, standing on green banks of turf, irregular masses of red-tiled house and grey tower, and occasional peeps down a long vista of canal, stretching away into the surrounding country—for these canals sometimes run from the gateways for miles, without a curve or bend to break their long perspective. To the little village of Dam, for instance, which is upon one of them, about four miles from Bruges, there is only one slight deviation, scarcely sufficient to hide the houses from any one standing on the bridge at Bruges. The description of any of these canals applies to all—a huge avenue of trees on one side, and a broad towing-path on the other; and on both sides wide stretches of flat agricultural country, growing chiefly wheat and flax. This flax industry, by the way, is not altogether a pleasant one for the pedestrian, since, after the flax is cut, it has to be steeped in the waters of the canal, and then spread out upon the fields to dry, at which time it smells abominably. Dam is a quaint little village enough, more Dutch than Belgian, in which a great disused Hôtel de Ville alone remains as a sign of former prosperity. This building is now turned into an hotel, or at least into a place where you can have a cup of coffee in a great bare kitchen, with huge beams of carved wood, and a fireplace as big as a bathing machine. The old Flamand in charge shows you the pair of tongs, ten feet long, and one or two other antiquities of a mild nature, and is perfectly content with two or three sous, or indeed with nothing at all; for Dam is “out of the track of ships,”—not mentioned in any guide-book, and seldom visited except by artists, and they, like bicyclists and lovers, go everywhere.

From the less-frequented portions of the town, and the environs of Bruges, the stranger with abundance of leisure will derive indeed much satisfaction. Betwixt the inner and outer circle of canals which surround the city there lies a network of small quaint streets,

and little, dusty, forgotten squares, in which nearly every house has a history. One cannot leave the town without passing across a bridge, and under a great fortified gateway—relics of the time when the city held its own valiantly : a kind of Northern Venice.¹ The likeness, by the way, is not altogether fanciful ; for in the great square, from one side of which the belfry “still watches o’er the town,” there is a large building which bears no slight resemblance to the celebrated Ducal Palace, with its long tiers of low-browed arches beneath, and massive wall above, pierced at wide intervals by pointed windows. The legends about the gates, and the belfry, and the old houses, are almost innumerable ; are they not all written in Delapierre’s *Chroniques* ? And of these tales, one told of the most picturesque spot just outside the town, the Minnewater, is perhaps the prettiest. The spot is, indeed, very beautiful ; for there one of the canals opens out into a broad space of water to meet a little river which comes down from the surrounding country. There is a low grey stone bridge with two or three wide arches ; great banks of reeds, like those in Millais’ “Chill October” ; a long row of tall poplars, stretching from the end of the bridge towards the town ; and by their side a solitary round tower, which stands out black against the sunset, and is reflected darkly in the water beneath. By the side of this bridge—which, by the way, is reported to have been the original of Longfellow’s celebrated poem of the same name—and separated from it only by a little weir, through which the river tumbles into the canal, is a low marshy island, now cultivated as a nursery garden, but still full of bushes, pollard willows, and rank luxuriant growth ; and it is about this island that the story of Minnewater is told, as follows :

In the days when the Romans and the Norsemen shared the fortunate country of Belgium between them, there lived a maiden, whose father was one of the chiefs of the latter race, and, with the usual perversity of women, she must needs fall in love, not with the young Dane whom her father had selected for her, but with one of the conquered Belgians. How they met, and how they loved, and how they plighted eternal fidelity, differs but little from all other stories of this nature ; nor are we surprised to hear that the despised lover saved the father’s life, and was thenceforth of course hated more cordially than ever by the piratical old scoundrel. How her sweetheart went off to the wars, and Minna put off her marriage to the young Dane whom her father had chosen for her ; and how, finally, when she could find pretext for delay no longer, she fled, with a single faithful slave, from the parental roof ; and what trials and sorrows she endured in her flight, all this follows naturally. But at last she came to a place of pleasant waters and luxuriant grass, on the borders of a

¹ Not a “vulgar” one like Rotterdam.

little village, and, as the chronicler tells us, sat down in cheerful confidence to wait for news of her lover. The days passed on, and still the lover came not, and the cheerful confidence wore away, till one day the slave saw the light fade out of her mistress's eyes, and Minna died quietly, by the side of the stream—and of course, even as she died, there came a noise of footsteps, and a sound of rending branches, and her lover comes—faithful, but too late. So, with the help of the slave, he diverted the water from one of the little courses which intersected the island, and made her grave reverently there for her in the bed of the stream, and then set to work to let the water into its old channel, till it flowed above the grave of his sweetheart. Then—for they did such things in these old days—he sat down to wait till his time too should come; and we fancy that the words of old Sir Godfrey Mallory about Lancelot would apply here: "Then Sir Lancelot never spoke nor smiled any more, and pined and dwined away till he died." And the water is called the Minnewater to this day.

So ends the legend.

After living for some time in this old-world atmosphere, the most contented grow desirous of a change, if only to make certain that the nineteenth century is still going on—that we have not reversed Rip Van Winkle's experience. The remedy is invariably to go to one of the two lungs of Bruges—Ostend or Blankenberghe—either of which is no more than a short half-hour's railway journey distant. It is one of the many accidental ironies of fate, that both of these towns should be, as far as their social life is concerned, of the most brand-new, flimsy, stucco-like description. Ostend is too well known to talk about here, but its little rival Blankenberghe is so new as to be comparatively unknown to the majority of English people. This little town is wonderful, and toy-like, stretching a rampart, one house thick, along a mile of red-brick *digue*, in front of a great waste of sandy beach, and a sea whose waters are too remote to be terrible. Every variety of mock Grecian, fantastic Gothic, and hybrid Moorish architecture, is represented in the little villas that border the *digue*, and which for the most part have a somewhat staring, low-necked-dress appearance, from the prodigality with which they display all the treasures of their interiors to the promenaders. Asmodeus himself would have no cause to take the roofs off these houses, as the whole of the front wall appears in the majority of cases to have been bodily removed, so that the inhabitants of each villa seem to be living in a section of a house, as in stage interiors. This little town, despite a certain element of the ludicrous, has one characteristic which is very delightful to those who come to it from Bruges, and that is, its excessive brightness. Built as it is on a ridge of sandhills, which border the whole line of this coast, it lies twenty feet or so above the surrounding country, and

overlooks at the back the green plain of the land and in front the grey plain of the sea. The dazzling white of the little villas, freshly painted at the commencement of each season, beats back the bright light reflected from the sea and the red bricks of the long promenade ; till, on a really fine day, the effect is one of the most dazzling possible, and reminds the stranger of the Chiäja at Naples.

Here one may see the ponderous German, and the even more imperturbable Dutchman, taking his pleasure in the most childlike fashion, to the music of perpetual bands, and with the help of innumerable donkeys. For if you go to Blankenberghe, you must mount one of the excessively small donkeys which stand in troops at either end of the *digue* ; and so away along the shore, either for a canter on the sand close to the sea, or a solemn promenade up and down the hills and valleys of soft sand, which lie a little back from the water. Hundreds of little red-and-white and blue-and-white bathing machines ; dozens of huge scarlet Japanese umbrellas stuck in the sand, with whole families basking in their shadow ; an almost interminable line of Dutch fishing-boats, all moored in precisely the same position, at exactly equal distances from one another ; banners and streamers and gilt balls, and pinnacles, turrets, and weathercocks above your head, a mass of baking bricks beneath your feet ; a vision of many big women in cool cream-coloured dresses and deep-red parasols ; a white sand, a steel-coloured sea, and a blue vault with a great globe of brightness in its midst ; all of these made up my first impression of Blankenberghe.

Just think of the change from grim, grey old Bruges, with the perpetually-chiming bells, the silent streets, the genteel poverty, and the general air of having dropped somehow out of the last century ; to this latest mushroom of civilisation, built of sand, sunshine, and stucco, and flaunting its money, its frivolity, and its fashion, in the very face of Nature. Nevertheless, here come all the worthy Brugeois, day after day throughout the summer, without any apparent sense of incongruity, but rather, I fancy, with a notion of being, in their way, Arcadian. Here do they gather sufficient ozone, and here sufficient change, to make their dull town life tolerable. And to the stranger their manners by the seaside are entirely delightful,—to see a stout Flamand of fifty or thereabouts solemnly punting by the aid of a small tambourine a minute india-rubber ball to another burgher of similar aspect, which is the favourite way in which fathers of families take exercise on the *digue*, is enough to restore one's faith in human nature. How little can there be wrong, morally or physically, with a sexagenarian who can still gambol, though a trifle heavily perhaps, after the same toy which delighted him half a century ago ; especially when he is able to do it under the eyes of four or five hundred wondering strangers.

The native element in Bruges consists of two classes : the small shopkeepers and peasantry, and what one of the former described to me as "*la haute aristocratie Belgique.*" *La haute aristocratie Belgique* takes its pleasure sadly enough, in a great empty clubhouse, at isolated balls at the Governor's residence, and in sloppily-got-up dogcarts, which it drives with square elbows and loose reins as fast as the rough pavement of the streets permits. The peasantry turn in from the country, and the shopkeepers turn out from their houses, every Saturday throughout the year ; and the whole town is then converted into a great open-air shop, the merchandise of which is either spread on the cobble-stones of the street, or Place, or displayed in little handbarrows and slightly-constructed sheds covered with canvas, all of which are put up, or brought in, in the early morning, and taken away at sundown.

All this seems tame and uneventful enough, and the resident strangers whom you meet with in the streets of Bruges are not of a character to alter that impression. They are for the most part waifs and strays, whose social life has for some reason or other come to an end in their native land, and who have come to Bruges to economise. The schools and convents are numerous there for the children, and there are but few shops to attract the women, and few temptations to expenditure for the men. Marked characters are they who order a pint of champagne, or put on a clean shirt for dinner. The town is permeated by a small stream of thin perpetual gossip, which leaves nobody alone, and busies itself about every detail of your personal appearance, your expenditure, your relations, and your business. "What do you do with yourself all day?" said the old Scotch banker to me, before I had been in the town a week. "What *do* you do with yourself all day. How is it you are never seen about?" And from this time forth the estimable old gentleman asked me question upon question, and I supposed retailed the answers for the benefit of his clients. The gossip of a small English county town is pretty busy, but the gossip of a small English population in a town like Bruges is perfectly incredible in its curiosity and pre-Raphaelite in its detail. After some weeks in the town, however, we get accustomed to this social inquisition, and even begin to take a share in it ourselves. A hankering to know what Brown has had for dinner, or why Miss Robinson didn't go to her convent yesterday, and how much Smith lost at billiards at the Café Foy, etc. etc., grows upon us daily. We get in the habit of talking to waiters, and shopkeepers, and children, and hotel managers, and in fact to any one who can minister to our insatiable thirst for useless information. The stir of the great world fades away, or rather concentrates itself into the rustic cackle of our bourg ; and a great indifference to all life which is

not bounded by the canals of the town, gradually overcomes us. Things are so much the same here, whether Bulgaria is united, or a French Ministry overthrown; even the records of a great bigamy case, or a new crusade, reach us faintly, as in old days the songs of the Sirens reached the ears of Ulysses' sailors; and as we meet day after day the same people, we say to them, and expect them to say to us, exactly the same things. "One of the bells at the belfry is a little flat," repeats my musical friend. "Mr. Blank has not paid for that jewellery which he gave to Mrs. So-and-so." "There will be a fête in the square on the 26th of October,—only three months hence!" "Mrs. Smith really ought not to go to England for a week, and leave that pretty daughter in charge of the children"; and so on, and so on. These are the things we say to each other day by day. We take them down out of our mental storehouse every morning, turn them round and dust them, perhaps even polish them up a little bit, and then sally forth to offer them gaily to the first comer, who in due course passes them on. What does it matter that there are in the great world without,

"Wars and rumours of wars, and stories of sieges and shipwrecks,"

when we, like the mariners in the "Faërie Queene," have "come into a quiet tide"?

Not the least curious part of this life is the dulness even of its scandal. There is a weariness in the way in which the men and women here say nasty things to each other, which seems to confess that even this too doesn't matter; and nobody dreams of being deeply offended, or taking any gossip very much to heart. After a time, however, all these peculiarities of the people and the place are accepted as a matter of course; and a strange sort of pleasure in the quiescence and the nothing-matter-i-ness of each day grows upon you. You realise how it is that people came here for a week, and stopped twenty years. It is like being on shore after a long swim, and a distinct effort is required to plunge again into the water.

"Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead leaves and stilled winds' riot,
In endless dream of dreams,"

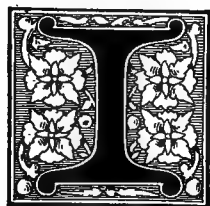
exactly expresses the character of the existence. And here come to enjoy that quiet a strange patchwork of people, whose lives are only alike in one thing, and that thing—failure.



THE EAVESDROPPER

From the original by William Hunt in the possession of the author

JEAN FRANÇOIS MILLET AND WILLIAM HUNT,
OR IDYLIC PAINTING IN FRANCE AND
ENGLAND.



It seems strange when we consider the matter carefully, that both in France and England there should have been, nearly at the same time, a small group of what may be called for the sake of brevity idyllic painters, the members of both groups being few in number and most exquisite in the quality of their work, and that in neither country should they have left adequate successors, or even determined the main direction which the development of national painting should take. Still more strange is the fact that the style of art which was carried to such perfection by Corot, Millet, Rousseau, and Daubigny should have sprung up in France at all; for all its relations are on the hither side of the Channel; and we must look for them in such work as the water-colour painting of Cox and Hunt, the landscapes of De Wint and Gainsborough, and to some extent in the classical naturalism of Turner.

There was little wonder that the critics and connoisseurs of the Salon scoffed at and rejected the work of Millet, when it first appeared, for the painting ran counter to every artistic tradition of their country. It was essentially unacademic, the qualities of style belonged to the ancient art of Greece rather than the cold science of Ingres or David; and in place of the clear, smooth perfection and elaborate finish at that time popular, Millet's painting gave only a rich sympathetic presentment of natural fact, in which truth of action was substituted for beauty of composition, and depth of feeling took the place of pictorial art beauty. The critics and painters saw at once that this art, if once accepted, would seal the condemnation of the then existing style; that it was no dry stick, but a sapling truth ready to bud and blossom, if only it might be planted with due tenderness in the cool shade. Fortunately, not all by chance perhaps,

these things do happen now and then when the world most needs them and is growing most dry and barren, when the paths of art are being choked with noisy tricksters, scientific pedants, or hopeless mediocrity, when fashion and frivolity are the notes and the aims of painting and painters, and when the struggle is who can say least in the loudest possible tone. Then one day there comes along, stolidly, roughly, and alas! for the most part sadly, one of those artists who take us back into the clear light of real beauty and true emotion, and who link the art of the day in which they live, to the great Art of all former and future ages.

No doubt the world was to a certain extent prepared for the arrival of such a painter as Jean-François Millet, for the ideas which he embodied on canvas are those which are vital to the life of to-day, and of which we are only just beginning to have real understanding and perception. Perhaps more accurately this applies to Millet's subjects, rather than his ideas, for the ideas after all are ancient enough, and it was only in showing their relation to a new class that Millet made his chief departure. The attempt to characterise the motives of such a painter's work is probably futile. But, though impertinent and useless with regard to the artist, it is neither if taken in connection with and in illustration of the art which is at the present time popular both in England and France. For the really fine things of the world are all of the nature of touchstones, and by these alone can we tell what is really worthy of our admiration. A library of declamation against the artistic practice of some of our popular Academicians would not carry a tithe of the conviction which the mere exhibition of *The Angelus* by the side of their paintings would convey. *Noscitur a sociis* is true here in a new sense, for the great picture not only proclaims itself, but absolutely destroys inferior companions, and even the people who are, as a rule, blind to the shortcomings of superficial painters would be inclined to reconsider their judgment if they could see the true work hung side by side with the false.

The ultimate condemnation of much of the superficial painting of the present day is perhaps to be found in the consideration of the fact, that the present century is above all others a century of thought about man and nature, a century which leaves no belief unquestioned and no phenomenon uninvestigated, and no shade of meaning or significance unsought for which can help to realise, even if it does not help to solve, the great problem of life—the problem of the why and the whither, the problem of the connection between humanity and the earth, the problem of the consolation and the suffering, the rest and the action, which make up each man's experience of life. And this being so, I think we must all feel, if we allow ourselves to consider pictures which are merely pretty, by which I mean pictures

in which there is no thought below the surface attractiveness, that we are beholding something which has been confectioned expressly for us, something which is out of tone and out of tune with our genuine sympathy and real experience, and is so less bearable to us than even the most unattractive rendering of reality.

The secret of Millet's greatness as an artist, apart from his technical excellence, which is to be considered separately, may well lie in his perfect, if unconscious, apprehension and exemplification of the above truth ; for in nearly all his pictures, and *in all his greatest*, there is to be found this union between man and nature, between the physical fact and the emotional experience, of which I have been speaking. To take an actual human being engaged in some ordinary avocation of his or her daily life, and to weld together the personality, the action, and the surrounding world, is what this artist did to perfection. Just think for a moment how significant is the achievement when, for the first time in the history of Art, a painter is able to take such a subject as sowing, or gleaning, or fetching water from the well, and render it so impressive, so generic, so monumental, that we not only forget the thousands of pictures which have dealt with similar scenes, but that we feel every future rendering must, in so far as it be good, partake of imitation ! This is indeed Art, the one true alchemy possible to man, the philosopher's stone by which each commonest thing may be transmuted into the golden ore of beauty and significance.

I said some pages back that the sentiment of this French idyllist was far more English than Gallic, but it would probably be truer to define it as being un-Parisian. For English painting, at least English idyllic painting, would scarcely have risen to the impersonal view of the peasant which we find held by Millet ; entire deference to the squire and his lady, not even yet quite eradicated from the mind of the English lower classes, is hardly consistent with this representation of the dignity of labour which Millet showed us so persistently, and in the truth of which he believed to the uttermost. If we look at *The Angelus*, for instance, a little closely, we can hardly fail to be struck by the self-possession, the self-sufficiency, in the good sense of the word, of the two figures. And though we allow in England that a labourer may be picturesque, may be healthy, may even be cheerful, we hardly allow, as far as our art is concerned, that he may be unconscious that he *is* a labourer, and may forget, even in his prayers, the position in which it has pleased God, and the customs of his country, to place him. The only man I know who did partially realise the peasant, apart from the restrictions of his position in life, was the late Fred Walker, in two of whose pictures (the *Ploughing*, and *The Old Gate*) there are to be found that freedom, dignity, and self-possession which, according to

the gospel of the fashionable novelist and the society journal, are alone to be found amongst the upper classes. And it is not unamusing to note how many people, who are firm admirers of Walker's painting in general, pull a wry face at the action of his ploughman driving the share through the furrow, and the pose of the workman in *The Old Gate*, who is removing the pipe from his mouth in unconscious deference to the affliction of the widow lady who meets him on his homeward way. People object to the freedom of the one man and the dignity of the other; possibly from the point of view of rural statistics both are improbable, but in the statistics of feeling they are true, and that is all with which the artist need concern himself. The sentiment is genuine, the art beautiful, the representation adequate, and all will endure and be admirable when the little Mrs. Grundyisms of to-day have passed into that limbo where all dead things lie dead.

But it is hardly necessary to say that between the idyllism of Walker and the idyllism of Millet there is a great gulf fixed, and that in one aspect of manhood our English master must vail his bonnet before the Frenchman. For though Walker could see the dignity of action that might be possible to a peasant or a workman, he did not and could not conceive the dignity of manhood that might reside within him; he caught and rendered magnificently, and with something of the old Greek nobility, the gesture, but the mind escaped him. His labourers have been out in the sun and wind, but have learnt nothing therefrom, and the earth has not made them a part of itself, and their toils have not become, as they have become with Millet's peasants, part of the very fabric of their lives. And I have always felt, in looking at Fred Walker's pictures, a curious inability to realise the personality of most of the people depicted therein. They are as impersonal as statues (I do not mean as likenesses of the Duke of Wellington or others by Sir Joseph Boehm), and their lack of individuality seems to be natural, and not to carry with it any sense of defect or incompleteness. This quality of Walker's work is more evident in his later than in his earlier pictures, for he began by being rather pre-Raphaelite in his delineation of character, and I have one of his earlier pictures in which a shy child is being introduced to her new mamma, in which the study of expression is the one fine thing in the picture; which is injured by a considerable amount of ugly costume insisted upon by the artist with somewhat objectless fidelity.

There is, however, only one Englishman with whom Millet can profitably be compared, for there is only one who has as yet given of the English peasant an absolutely veritable record. This is a water-colour painter dead some forty or more years ago called



THE GAMEKEEPER

pen drawing washed with colour by William Hunt

(From the original)

William Hunt, and often for the sake of distinction—for there are many Hunts who paint—nowadays “Old William Hunt”; he was one of our great (almost of our greatest) artists, and though his art is chiefly known for the exquisite perfection of his fruit and flower pieces, yet his delineation of rural scenes and rural characters was of even greater value, not only because it is a higher and more difficult thing to paint a man well, than a dog-rose or a branch of apple-blossom, but because when Hunt's work turned to the subject of humanity, it became at once less elaborate, and more powerful. The same hand which could mark and reproduce each faintest change of colour in the petals of the primrose or the blush of the grape, could, when it turned to the delineation of men and women, forget, or at least disregard, in the pursuit of character and expression, all the minutely laborious brushwork to which it was habituated, and striking clean down to the heart of each rustic model, comprehend his character and his life, and set him down for ever in simplest, truest guise.

These words are no way exaggerated: for nearly a dozen years I had the daily opportunity of studying forty of Hunt's finest works, and it is my deliberate opinion that for absolute unpretentious truth they stand alone in English art. For the heart of pre-Raphaelitism is here without its weakness, without its morbid feeling, and, most wonderful of all, we see as we look at these pictures, that the painter did not even know he was a great artist—the simplicity and lack of pretentiousness of the work are beyond all praise. Look, for instance, at this grand sketch of a Gamekeeper facing the next page. Titian himself could have given no truer, finer dignity to Pope or Emperor than Hunt has given here by dint of adhering to the plain truth of natural gesture, and by reproducing that gesture without self-consciousness or straining after effect. He was not making a picture of the Gamekeeper—at least he was—but the picture as it were grew naturally out of the subject. What a piece of work it is even bereft of its colour and reduced to so small a scale! We wish we could persuade a dozen or two of our readers who talk or care about English art to take the *Universal Review* to the Royal Academy Exhibition—it is still open—and compare this figure by “Old William Hunt” with any single figure, portrait or fancy, which they can find therein. We would forfeit a large sum if the majority did not confess that, in qualities of unaffected dignity, ease, untutored grace, strength and vitality, our Gamekeeper could find no equal amidst the Academy pictures. And as a matter of Art the comparison would be still more in the old water-colour master's favour; for this is of the essence of fine art as surely as is the *Tailor*, by Moroni, in the National Gallery, or *The Angelus* of Millet, or the *Haymakers* of

Bastien Lepage. It is work in which every line is right, every means properly employed to produce the desired effect. We talk about the wonderful finish of Meissonier, but finish he never so minutely, his work cannot be more complete than this—nay, it cannot be as complete, for here Hunt has got to the heart of his subject, not rested content with his outer man. And in this Gamekeeper we have a type of the class, as well as a representation of the subject. The amateur will notice that the execution of this drawing betrays a method which has at the present day passed into disrepute, and that is the combined use of pen and brush; the majority of the outline portion of this composition having been sketched in with a broad quill pen, with which very probably was combined a brushful of colour; in any case the outlines have been filled up with water-colour of various tints subsequently. The method was one sometimes used by David Cox, and was indeed taught to the present writer by that painter's son as lately as five-and-twenty years ago; but though it offers certain facilities for quick sketching, the practice is one by no means to be commended, being, indeed, wholly opposed to the manner of nature, and rendering it scarcely possible for the artist to treat the subject with sufficient delicacy. This was by no means an ordinary way for Hunt to work, and is almost the only very fine drawing by him which I have seen executed in this manner, though there are a considerable number of early works in which the pen has been used freely.

And now, bearing this sketch well in mind, look at the engraving which forms the frontispiece to this article, and is from William Hunt's most celebrated picture of *The Eavesdropper*—a work which embodies all the best qualities of the painter and many of the most marked characteristics of English art. I remember Sir Frederick Burton saying many years ago to my father—perhaps in a fit of generous enthusiasm—*that is the finest water-colour in the world*. And some long while afterwards, when *The Eavesdropper* was exhibited at the Fine Art Society's Rooms in Bond Street, Ruskin wrote almost as strongly as the President of the National Gallery had spoken. So at least there are some good judges who would endorse the present writer's opinion, for the work in question has long appeared to me to mark the highest point to which water-colour painting has ever attained. Of course it is not a drawing in transparent colour only—none indeed of Hunt's finest works are so executed—and in the present instance a full use of body¹ colour has been made throughout. The extraordinary excellence of the drawing, technically speaking, is in its preservation of the delicacy, brilliancy, and transparency of effect of mere water-colour, while the strength, solidity, and richness of a fine oil-painting are obtained by the

¹ Opaque white.

dexterous use of opaque tints. Those who have studied technically the art of water-colour painting, especially in its later developments under such great artists as Walker and Pinwell, know that even in the very finest examples of the art there is scarcely to be found this union. In, for instance, the most admirable of the Fred Walker drawings, beautiful as they are in colour and atmosphere, there is in the aspect of the paint itself some lack of transparency and brilliance—they in no way suggest the *white* paper beneath; the colour might have been mixed like mortar and laid on with some most Liliputian trowel, of such mortar-like consistency is it. No trace of such deficiency, for deficiency it is, is to be found here. Alike in the opaque and transparent portions, the work appears transparent, fresh, and lively, and in the modelling and texture of the flesh especially is this to be seen—where the delicacy of work has been so great and its result so exquisite, that it is almost impossible to mark the portions wherein the opaque colour has been used. In other parts of the picture, where the artist relied less upon delicacy than strength, the use of white is far more apparent, especially in the more brilliantly-lighted details. The painting, for instance, of the boards which line this rough stable is a masterpiece of solid, almost rough painting, as large and free in method of work as if the artist had had a twenty-foot canvas in front of him. With passage from the strongly-lighted side of the picture to the shadow behind, the transparent colour comes into use again, and perhaps from a technical point of view the greatest triumph of the drawing is in the delineation of the old horse-collar and harness which hang in the shadow. But apart from the mere handicraft of the picture, its supreme quality is the marvellous richness and beauty of the colour. This is at once deep and lustrous, full of subtle changes and pleasant contrasts, shifting each moment, or rather, in each smallest fraction of the composition, and presenting, when viewed as a whole, a piece of mingled tone and colour which might hang between a Rembrandt and a Titian without fearing the comparison.

The contrast between such idyllism as Hunt's and that of François Millet could hardly be more complete as regards the temper of mind, the point of view from which each regarded his subjects. They might be called indifferently the optimist and the pessimist of nature, for each was at once, as compared with the other, both optimistic and pessimistic; for instance, if we take the mere surface of things and look at the people and their surroundings which William Hunt gives us, we feel inclined to think that the country contains nothing but pleasant, happy men and women, sunburnt maidens, laughing stable-boys, and stalwart gamekeepers. The very gipsies (look at our illustration else) are comfortable, comparatively well-to-do people, who mend their gowns and peel their lemons in a pleasant,

almost conventional manner. There is no hint of that harshness of Nature towards the poor from which Millet finds so much of his interest, and to which his pictures owe so much of their power. For Hunt saw only the smiling side of Nature, regarded her only, if we may so put it, from the still-life point of view, and liked best those aspects of her the material of which he could pack up in a basket and take home to paint at his leisure on the studio-table. But, though the outside of the English painter was so cheerfully optimistic, I think, rightly considered, his art was essentially, when compared with that of Millet, a material, a negative, and even a pessimistic one; for, in the rustics which he gave us, veritable and actual as they were, there seemed to be no touch to redeem their rusticity, no conception that life might hold finer things for them than beer and skittles, or unlimited provision of the fat bacon and big pies in which their souls and bodies delighted. But in Millet's work there is always, beneath the suffering inflicted by Nature, and the toil imposed by man upon man, some hint of recompense; the people are weary, very weary, but they are neither ashamed nor altogether hopeless: and Nature which has caused them so much pain has, in many ways, also to some extent requited them. They are not small figures of poor people in a landscape, these *Gleaners* or *Sowers* or *Tenders of Sheep*; they are rather the inheritors of the earth; they never suggest the presence, round the corner, of an employer of labour, of some one who on Saturday night will dole out his shillings to duly-thankful recipients.

This difference, which marks, perhaps, one of the great border-lines between the art of France and England, is very real and very important, for it represents the presence or absence of right feeling for the dignity of labour and the worth of manhood, tells us that the beauty of the world is not exclusively made for capitalists, that much indeed of natural loveliness is impossible for the capitalist to understand, until he brings himself into relations with the everyday joys, sorrows, and experiences of those who serve him.

One curious thing about Hunt's work in this connection is that, though it reflects the English conventional feeling in such matters, it does so with absolute unconsciousness, and shows that the painter himself is entirely sincere in his representation. All that he saw in the rustic is here, quite untouched by affectation; it never occurred to him that there might be a reverse side to the medal, that there were seasons when the trees were blossomless instead of fruitful, when the fat bacon and the beer were wanting, when the sunshine was veiled, and the leafless branches dripped heavily with the rainfall. In the art of Hunt's time, moreover, no English painter seems to have had such feeling; and although, for instance, David



THE GIPSIES

WILLIAM HUNT

From the original water colour

Cox and De Wint would habitually choose sombre landscapes and wild effects of wind and storm, yet they rarely dealt with autumn or winter, and you might look through a tolerably complete collection of works by either painter without meeting with a single example in which that quiet regretful poetry, so common a note of our modern landscape painting, strongly predominates.

If I had to select one word to characterise the water-colour art of the last generation, it would be the word *cheery*. The artists were always making the best either of a good or a bad business, and there is an absolute freshness and joviality about David Cox's worst weather pictures far more inspiring than the majority of sunlit compositions which we might find in the Academy to-day; and here is another fact worth mentioning in this connection, which is that nowadays our landscape painters are very chary of representing windy weather. With the exception of one or two men who paint the sea (above all, Mr. Henry Moore) I cannot at the present moment remember a single English artist who attempts to depict the hurried march of the clouds, or the wild tossing of the trees, storm-driven; and yet, after all, it is in such phases as this that Nature becomes most alive, and most akin to humanity. Who that has often struggled along a sea-cliff in the teeth of the windy weather has not sometimes felt a sense of exhilaration and oneness with the turmoil round him which almost seemed to identify his feeling with that of the storm itself, and by dint of much communion with Nature, and much taking of her in her roughest as well as in her mildest moods, our old water-colour painters got to understand this feeling, and so rendered it that the freshness remains in their work to the present day.

Compare a landscape by, for example, Mr. Keeley Halswelle, with a landscape by David Cox, or, for the matter of that, with Old Crome or De Wint: you will find that, though Mr. Halswelle does frequently attempt to paint windy skies, yet that the clouds therein are always stationary; the reeds bend under the influence of the breeze in his pictures, but they do not spring back again, they do not blow to and fro as they would appear to do in a Cox landscape. Even in the *Chill October*, which, on the whole, is probably the best windy landscape which has been painted for the last twenty years, there is much of this stationary quality—the impression given by the picture is one of stillness, although the scene itself is of unrest. I think this lack of sympathy with the more impersonal phases of Nature must spring from the increase of self-consciousness in modern artists' minds, and partly, no doubt, from the introspective habit of modern thought, partly from the increased luxury of their lives, and partly from continual pressure upon them of public exhibi-

tions. For remark well that Nature is far less personal in storm than in calm; from the very moment the wind begins to blow, the personalities begin to disappear, even as the reflections of a boat are scattered at the first breeze which ruffles the surface of the water. And as the forces of Nature manifest themselves more and more, as the breeze freshens to a gale, and the gale to a hurricane, so does the personal element of a landscape, and the need of special personal feeling with regard to it, decrease, to such an extent that, when figures are introduced into such scenes, they please us best when they are represented as suffering *most* from the elements, when the belated traveller is crossing the moor with the greatest difficulty, when the ship is shattered upon the rocks or driven helplessly before the tempest.

There seems to be a strange contradiction in the fact that the elder landscapists of whom I have been speaking, though they painted such impersonal pictures, almost invariably introduced figures therein, while their modern descendants, when they paint landscape at all, do it almost exclusively from a personal point of view and most frequently without the introduction of figures at all. The whole modern landscape art of France, as well as England, is touched with this personal and generally morbid feeling; and such work as that of Corot and Rousseau relies almost entirely for its attractiveness upon your sympathy with the special mood of the painter. When work of this character is carried to its highest point, we do get no doubt the most noble forms of landscape, for we get that union with human feeling and natural fact which lies at the root of all the finest art. But, be it noticed, that unless the painter's mind is one of extreme sensitiveness and wide grasp of feeling, it almost certainly results either in his reproducing only some one special aspect of Nature which appeals to him, or in his, so to speak, endeavouring to lash himself into a state of sensitiveness on occasions when he really feels nothing.

There are, and always will be, two kinds of art with regard to which people will dispute which is the more admirable—the art which paints adequately what its owner sees, and the art which paints that which its owner feels. But for those who do not feel anything special it must always be hopeless to attempt to paint in the manner of those who do: the only secure foundation for great landscape painting must be, not the feeling of Corot, not the feeling of Rousseau, or Daubigny, or Millet, but the feeling, that is to say, the facts of Nature herself; founded upon the latter, the artist may learn to feel before his work is completed, and at all events as far as his work goes it will be real, though it may be uninteresting. But if it be founded upon imitation, if he strives to express a sentiment which he does not possess, but only admires in others, it must be

a sham, it must be worthless. Here, as elsewhere, the injunction holds good : *Touch not the sacred vessels rashly, for it is profanation.*

These, it seems to me, are some of the reasons why the old English school of water-colours might have formed such a solid foundation for English landscapists; for the members of the school were for the most part sane, clear-headed men, who went and took their art, as best they could, from Nature herself, and did not think too much about what they meant by their painting. Think that in this enlightened nineteenth century, under the wing of a nascent South Kensington Museum, and the fostering care of the Royal Academy itself, these men should have lived and died without national recognition or reward; that they were never allowed to share in the honours of the Royal Academy, and that not a *single picture of theirs is to be found in the national collection*—that not the slightest trouble was taken to keep their art alive; and that, if another David Cox and another De Wint were to arise to-morrow, all the art authorities of England would repeat the same neglect, stupidity, and injustice with the greatest pleasure!

The crew of interested persons who profess to reward and guide, as well as represent, English art, have been guilty during the last forty years of systematic neglect of their duty in many respects, but in none more than this, that they have seen the fine landscape art of their country dying slowly an unnatural death, and have stretched out no finger to relieve it, but have, on the contrary, given it at every possible moment a shove toward the tomb. And yet so tough and of such vigorous frame was the invalid, that even yet it is scarcely too late to save him. For, as I have often said, and as I shall go on saying till I get them recognised, there are a few good English landscapists still left among us, men who are not all unworthy to be the successors of David Cox and Peter de Wint. There is Robert Collier, for instance, and Hine and Wimperis, all of the Institute of Painters of Water-Colours, and all sincere and accomplished artists in a pure style of landscape painting, and there is George Fripp and Hook the Academician, and Aumonier and Henry Moore, chiefly known for his seascapes, to whom, by the way, the Jury of the International Exhibition of Paris have just given one of the only two medals of honour bestowed upon the English section, though the Academy kept the painter waiting till he was nearly fifty before they made him an Associate, and whom they have not elected a full Academician even to the present day.

Look at the picture which is printed here on the opposite page. Are any of our readers so blind that they cannot see the difference between such a landscape as this and those which are presented for

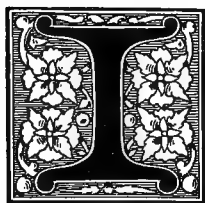
their admiration by the *doyens* of the Royal Academy ; by Messrs. MacWhirter, Graham, and Leader ? I do not wish to say a word against the work of any of these gentlemen, further than that it is not in any way comparable in quality to such art as this—*The Green Lanes* by David Cox. Think for a moment what it is which renders the picture here given so superior, and dismiss from your mind if possible any notion that it can be superior by accident, or that there is anything in the subject chosen which will account for the excellence. It is not in the subject, and it is no accident : it is because the artist had both the power and the desire of representing Nature, and exercised it without affectation and without prejudice. We can feel the force and freshness of Nature here, not only because Cox was a great artist, but because his work was done face to face with his subject, not cockered up in the studio to please the public taste. And one proof of this is that, out of all the thousand sketches and pictures which Cox executed, there are not two which are even superficially alike in the effect depicted. He was as happy on a calm river as on a windy moor, on the sands as amongst the heather, in the field or in the woods, and, indeed, one of the most exquisite drawings of his I know was a seascape off Hastings. The present picture belonged to my father, and belongs, I am glad to say, to myself, and having known and loved it for many years, I may, perhaps overrate its merit ; but it appears to me to possess all the essentials of the greatest art, cataloguable and uncataloguable. There is magnificent composition, arrived at in the most, apparently, accidental manner, and yet scientifically, demonstrably perfect ; there is the most wonderful rendering of a strong wind and rainy sky, and of the general aspect of the country in stormy weather, which I have ever seen ; there is great beauty of colour, and there is an amount of life and movement throughout the picture which can be felt even in this greatly-reduced reproduction. But the chief quality of the painting can hardly be defined, for it lies in the sense of style with which the work is executed. We cannot look at it without thinking of the great masters of painting, and one immediately wishes to compare it with a Gainsborough, or even with old Salvator Rosa. The work is big in style and in execution ; it is man's work, standing firmly on its legs, and going straight about its business, not whining because of the destinies of humanity, or fiddling about with mere prettinesses of sentiment and effect ; above all—at least above all in the present connection of which we are speaking, in the connection of English art—the picture is one in which the national character is fully and firmly expressed. The feeling is clean, healthy, out-of-door-English ; the artist evidently cares no more for a wetting than do the old fishermen who are getting ready their bait under the wind-tossed trees ; and we know that the painter saw this thing and rejoiced at it, and was altogether a robust capable person, though his art was so



THE STAFFORDSHIRE LANES.
From the original water colour by David Cox in the possession of the author

sensitive and so true. I have often heard it said by more or less ill-informed persons that such subjects as these were the only ones which Cox attempted, or in which he was wholly successful. As a matter of fact, almost the reverse is the case; a very large number of his works show us the most sunny skies and the calmest weather, and for the close of this article I have selected a very beautiful example of this manner in the picture produced on the preceding page of *Old Battersea Mill*. No reproduction could possibly give the softness and delicacy of this drawing, but even here sufficient is left to show the sunny peace of the scene and the painter's absolute sympathy therewith. This picture is not more than a sixth of the size of the *Green Lanes*, and it may be worth pointing out that, as in all really great artists' work, the diminution of the scale makes no difference to the breadth of style and effect conveyed by the picture. This drawing, as in the little three-inch vignettes by Turner, of the Holy Land, might have been made of any size, but could not have conveyed a more perfect sense of distance and atmosphere. Nothing is indeed more certain than that great art is wholly independent of scale, and that whether you paint the size of *Le Vin du Curé* of Meissonier, or *The Last Judgment* of Angelo, your picture may contain the same spaces.

TWO DAYS OF A PAINTER.



It was in the early summer of 1883 that I first seriously studied landscape-painting. I had, of course, drawn and sketched¹ a good deal before, and had been at an art school in England, and in studios abroad, but this in connection with my writing upon art. For that purpose also I had studied anatomy and dissection and modelling at Rome. In the year named, however, for various causes which it is unnecessary to mention, I felt the need of harder and more sustained work than my former desultory practice, and I was, moreover, somewhat unwilling to bear the reproach which is commonly made against critics—the reproach, namely, that they at ease condemn, and ignorantly reject good painting because of their technical ignorance of the craft. In some ways the difficulties which lay before me were greater than ordinary, not only from age, but because of my many *Press* engagements. Moreover, I did not so much want to learn the technique of any artist or school, as I wanted, if possible, to study unbiassedly the aspects of Nature in their relation to painting, as I had previously studied, from the literary point of view, the relative excellencies of various schools and methods of art in relation to thought, emotion, and æsthetic pleasure.

Of schools and styles I knew, it seemed to me, enough, and more than enough, and the need was to learn what Nature could teach me independent of any special artistic aim,—starting as little from the pre-Raphaelite point of view as from the *plein-air* or the Impressionist theories, disregarding alike Barbizon and the Royal Academy, thinking no more of Cox than of Turner, of Millet than Walker, of Peter Graham than Linnell,—to forget all these, in fact, and just try

¹ Two studies are inserted in this article (in the large-paper edition) simply to show the character of this early work. They were done about 1881-82, and the first appeared in the *Graphic* of the latter year with the addition of two figures drawn from my suggestions, and with various alterations suggested by the inspiration of the wood-engraver.

simply for reality. I thought that the experiment would be an interesting one, especially if carried out thoroughly by one who, like myself, had no artistic faculty above the average, and determined to try it for five years, for my own satisfaction, in such intervals as I could spare from my literary work. These resolved themselves practically into about three months in the Long Vacation, though in one or two halcyon years I managed to get a month in springtime.

Having no teacher, I constructed for myself a little code of rules which, on the whole, were observed pretty faithfully, of which the most difficult to keep was the one prescribing that at least one fresh sketch was to be made every day. For the first three years I tried to observe this regulation, and, on the whole, did do so, but was then finally vanquished, and I offered my creditor conscience a composition of ten shillings in the pound, or a sketch every other day, which was accepted reluctantly. The rule is, I think, for all landscape students an admirable one, and so is the next article of my code, which I believe to be even more admirable—in the sense of taking more conceit out of the young painter. This was the regulation which forbade the selection of any conventionally picturesque subject, or the addition to the sketch of any such detail. No sand-carts on the beach, no flower-gathering children or hay-raking women in the meadows, no weary peasants in blue blouses on the country road or sitting under the corn-stacks, no mowers at morn or eve, no gleaners, fish-maidens, or weather-beaten sailors pulling driftwood from the sea—none, in fact, of the infinite series of *old hats*—to use the studio slang—which make up the stock-in-trade of the popular artist, dear to the heart of Cassell, welcome in the halls of the illustrated periodicals. All such matters, incidents, and people were to be *taboo*—the sketch was to rely on nothing but its correspondence with the natural fact, the colour, the light and shade, the form of its subject. If it had not some degree of fidelity, at all events the weakness, the falsehood, were to be undisguised: and very marked and undisguised they were in my efforts.

I doubt in very truth whether any one who ever tried seriously to paint has produced such a collection of abominable daubs as I did during the years mentioned. I doubt whether to this day any painter living has a clumsier hand, or draws with more effort and less *touch*. I would have given painting up in despair in that first year, were it not for one thing in which I much delighted, and for which I may have had some faint natural capacity, and that was *Colour*. Perhaps because I had lived as a lad with pictures which were finest of all English work in this respect; perhaps because in after years I had studied Italian painting continually, in Venice and Florence; perhaps only because the matter appealed to me above

all other art beauties—for whatever reason, there did seem to me to be now and again some progress in this direction in my own work, and I grew to have some faint hope that one day I should *beat my music out*, and so—I went on. Day after day I brought back to the village inns in which my autumn was passed, one sketch worse than another, day after day I set out again to fresh effort, and fresh failure. Sometimes in rage the canvases were hurled into the sea, trodden under foot, trampled into the beach sand, left anywhere and everywhere, so that I might see them no more, and as the possibility of any real progress grew, or appeared to grow, less and less, so the daily humiliation and despondency increased—at times almost unbearably.

My main subject was the most beautiful thing in Nature, and what is surely the most difficult to understand and to reproduce—the sea, and there I sat solemnly, stupidly, earnestly trying to copy it, as a child tries to shape his letters. Of course the result was failure; but—and this is why I have written the foregoing—though the sea would not yield to me the secret I demanded, my effort gave me another, and perhaps a better reward. I learned something of the difficulties which painters conquer, and something of the understanding which they gain. I realised how false was all art which is literally and solely reproductive, how worthless all art which has not realism for basis and guide; and also that hard lesson, of content in personal failure, and, if I may dare to say so, of gladness that there are others who succeed. Gradually in each changing aspect of the great waters, in their varying voices and their myriad meanings, I found peace and strength. The mystery and the meaning, the terror and the majesty, of the sea stilled despondency and atoned for failure—gradually I came to feel the poetry, which I could not explain in terms of paint and canvas, of its changeful unchanging beauty. And with this there may too have come some first faint promise of good artistic work, which might possibly have been one day realised had I been able to leave off writing, and—had I been ten years younger.

I think the most intense pleasure I ever experienced was when I heard casually about this time, that the hanging committee of a certain gallery had said of one of my sketches directly it was brought up, *We'll have that, at all events!* This was better than one's first proof—and oh, how good that is—that flimsy strip of paper with the "reader's" queries and the unintelligible printer's instructions!

So my self-imposed task had served a purpose though achieving little. Artists are born, not made, and painting is not to be learned by rule-of-thumb in a few months' work yearly; and thirty-five is one age, and fifteen another, and the latter much preferable for swallowing

formulæ, and training the hand—all of this had been made pretty evident to me : but then I had found out too, what no one but a painter ever can know, the kind of effort, endurance, patience, and knowledge a painter needs, and gains. I had learned more than a hundred years spent in the study of styles and theories would have taught me, of both the limitations and the possibilities of art ; of the painter's feeling towards his work and his subject ; of his conscious failure, his rare and fleeting contentment. I had come to realise the truth so frequently mentioned, so seldom felt, that in proportion to the knowledge and capacity of the artist, are his conviction of his own incompetency to render the beauty of Nature, and his discontent with the little that he is able to achieve ; last, and perhaps best of all, I had grown to know that faithful work does even for the least competent, in the long run bring some recompense in wider insight and keener perception, and though you may be at the end of life what you were at the beginning, a student rather than a master, you will be neither base, nor altogether unhappy—for you will have learned to be glad when others do that for which your hands are unavailing, and proclaim the truths which you can only know and feel.

The sermon is somewhat long for the occasion, too short for the text ; and my only reason for saying these things was to explain how the two following sketches were written. They are simply and exactly what they profess to be—the *untouched* records of two impressions of country life, written on each occasion after the day's painting was finished. For this reason I have thought them worth including here, and have prefaced them by an account of the effort to teach myself painting. Taken together, I think they have a certain value, both objective and subjective, as showing both what was actually seen and heard on the occasions in question, and as suggesting two phases of artistic feeling and experience, which are perhaps new to some of my readers. They show at least how the pictorial aspect of Nature mingles itself in a painter's mind with the human environment, and makes, as it were, a special atmosphere, half-mental, half-physical, the embodiment of which in his work is at once his greatest problem and his keenest pleasure.

WILD WEATHER : 3RD NOVEMBER 1883.¹

There was certainly an unwonted bustle in the inn that morning. The bar loiterers showed a brisk and somewhat excited air ; the landlord, one of the stoutest and best-tempered

¹ Both these sketches have the titles they originally bore when published in the *Spectator*, and are reprinted *verbatim*, for the reasons given above.

men in the world, had rolled up his sleeves a trifle higher than was usual at eleven o'clock. The old greyhound, ordinarily the only idle person allowed on the establishment, wandered to and fro restlessly, and poked his nose into one person's hand after another, as if to discover what was afloat. Even the young lady from London, who was chiefly notable for a crop of ginger curls and a dress-improver of the largest size, showed signs of animation. Doors blew open, windows rattled, bits of straw and seaweed flew cheerfully in at the swing-doors, sea, sky, and wind somehow had gone astray, and were poking their noses into the bar-parlour, in imitation of the greyhound.

It was past eleven ere I had got my camp-stool, canvas, etc., packed up for the day's work, and was ready to start. It had been blowing hard all night from the south-west, and this was the morning of October 18th, when the high tide was foretold. It was strange how the wind, or the expected water, or some subtle combination of both, had affected the usually torpid inhabitants of Rye. A bold, almost buccaneering look, pervaded the people; the talk was all of the river, the sea, and the wind. The dwellers on the march had become for once dwellers by the sea, and were evidently proud of the fact.

To my amusement, I was looked upon with considerable respect, when it was found I was going down to the port, some two miles off, sketching. "You'll find it main rough down there," said the local carpenter, who was a bit of an artist in his way—at least so he fancied, for he had made the frame for an engraving of one of Gustave Doré's pictures—and the landlord pressed a glass of ginger brandy upon me before starting, as a sort of stirrup-cup, I thought, in case we should meet no more.

It was wild weather, certainly: the sky was a misty, thin blue, with thousands of small cumulus clouds drifting quickly onwards and upwards from the horizon. Every now and then towards the sea the wind tore a small space of the sky clear of the drifting rack, and disclosed a glistening extent of fleecy clouds, lying in long, close ranks against the blue, and looking as though they had never known or even heard of wind and storm. The old church and tumbled red roofs of the town showed clear and bright, with that brightness in which colour seems to be lost even more than in shadow. The noises of the shipyards, generally striking the visitor as the chief element of life in the town, were gathered up and swept into unison with the wind that rushed past them from the sea, and were only distinctly audible now and then in a lull. Within two or three feet of the old ferry-house, the old ferryman looked down bewildered on a turbid, yellow current, which was substituted for the grey mud and quiet flow of the river in ordinary times, and said, half proudly, half

sadly, as he ferried me across to the marsh, "There'll be three feet of water in my cottage, if the wind goes round to the north." I left him contemplating this prospect, which, by the way, was not realised, and set out along the sea-wall. Everything on the way spoke of the tide and the gale. The sea-gulls walking about quietly on the fields, and scarcely troubling to rise at one's approach; the cows and sheep lying down close to the shelter of the bank which separated the marsh and the river; the river itself spreading widely over its low banks, and lapping eagerly against the sea-wall; the submerged fences and gates, and the bare tops of the piles which marked the channel, alone showing above the water.

I must fail to describe, as I failed to realise distinctly, wherein lay the keen sense of excitement and pleasure which this scene conveyed, —whether it sprang from the contrast of the present appearance with the wonted desolate calm of the marsh and low-lying river, whether it was merely the bright sunshine mingling with the roar of the wind and the shrieks of the sea-gulls, or whether it was the invasion of the sea into its old territory—for long ago Rye rose above the waters instead of the land. The scene, however, was worth looking at, even independent of any such feeling; and our countrymen who go to much expenditure of trouble and money to gaze upon the Roman Campagna, might find an easy substitute for many of its chief beauties, in their homely Sussex. Here, too, are softly-moulded lines of field and heath, here are long sweeps of hills bounding a blue distance. Here, too, the colour shifts and changes momentarily with the drifting cloud shadows and flickering sunshine, and the eye can rove at pleasure over a plain as apparently boundless as the great Campagna sea. If Fairlight is not as high as Soracte, it too has a bold precipitous outline, and a character of its own; and the simple tower of the church, which stands out so sharply on the crest of its down, might be a campanile, as far as strength and grace are concerned. There are no olive trees, and no aqueducts, and no tomb of a loving husband to a faithful wife; but there are old houses, whose beauty is twined with the doings of our own people; there is the grey gateway, and the massive tower of Rye Church crowning the irregular houses, which seem to crowd round and look up to it, even as their inhabitants might do; and underneath the tower there are the black masts of the fishing-boats, pointing as with outstretched finger in the same direction. And for those who want more heroic architecture, and records of war rather than peace, is there not Camber Castle to be seen across the foaming water of the river? And, strangely enough, inside its green quadrangle is a circular tower, with a course of sculptured stone running around its rude masonry, which, if it stood alone on the Campagna, not one in a thousand folk would not guess to be Cecilia Metella's. And above

all, is there not our old friend and safeguard, the sea, hinted at by that group of masts on the edge of the marsh, by the sandhills which stretch out in long perspective from the port into the distance, and by the sea-gulls which fly shrieking above our heads? Something of the spirit of Kingsley comes over the scene, and shouts a glad defiance of the wild weather in the teeth of the spray and wind.

But there was no reaching the port that day, for the rising tide rushed feet above the little foot-bridge which led from the sea-wall towards the sea, and I was forced to content myself with the view of the flooded river and the town beyond. How it blew the palette in my face, and plastered *madder-lake* on the nose, and *cadmium* on the forehead; how it tore the canvas from my hand (no easel could have stood for a minute), and turned it face downwards on the rough wiry grass; how it blew the medium out of the dipper, and spread it in a shower upon the middle of the picture; how I lost hat, handkerchief, and temper, need not be recorded, for these are all usual accidents of sketching in a gale; but the game was well worth its candle.

Not often in one's life does one get the chance to see one of Nature's best transformation scenes enacted in the very place and under the very circumstances which could most enhance its beauty, and for many a year the change of that quiet marsh into a seething mass of yellow foam, the way in which the wind roared, the sun shone, the sea-fowl shrieked, and the hungry water came rushing over fence and gate to within a foot of the crest of the sea-wall, will be worth remembering.

It seemed like coming back to another life, to return to the little inn, and find the landlord still serving his customers, the greyhound still prowling restlessly, and all folk talking unceasingly of the wild weather.

QUIET WEATHER: *Spectator*, 8th November 1884

About a year ago I tried to make a word-photograph of a day's doings in rough weather at an old-fashioned south-coast fishing village: to-day I want to describe the aspect of life in the calm, grey weather we have been experiencing lately, as it appeared to me in a far more out-of-the-way part of England, twenty miles from a railway station on the Atlantic shore.

The slates of the cottages here have little of the cold, purple tint, but are varied in faint green and bluish silver; and where the gables slope against the grey sea, the sunshine laughs and dances



Imp. DRAUGHT BY LESIEUX, Paris

THE SLEEPY POOL

Facsimile of an original drawing by ERNEST PARTON

upon them almost as it does upon the waves themselves. In front of the jagged rocks which border our little cove, the great seine-boats lie, massive and dark, dwarfing all the smaller fishing-craft into insignificance, waiting for the pilchards, who seem loth to appear. In front of the coastguard's cottage, cutting sea and sky and rock, and dividing the little landscape into all kinds of irregular triangles, rises the inevitable white mast and yard of the retired sailor, carrying in this instance a weathercock of native design, representing a pilchard whose tail points obstinately seaward, irrespective of any change in the weather.

To the right of the inn window rise whitewashed stone cottages, and to the left sink the same; beneath, the road dips by a red geranium and a water-butt to the hidden beach. On the low wall in front of the window, rooted securely in some crack of its coping-stones, flowers a brilliant marigold—the one bright spot in the picture. Such a queer, quaint little grey hamlet, where year passes after year, bringing no alterations save a few more wrinkles to the aged, and a little less laughter to the young, the blustering weather of winter and spring, the coming of the pilchards, the flash of the world seen now and then in the eyes of a wandering artist, the sermons on alternate Sundays at two *neighbour villages*,—such are the matters which form the talk and interest of these folks' lives. A still, silent life enough, where small things have to be made the most of if one would be content; and yet one gets to be very fond of its peace, which is hardly monotony, of watching the foliage change from green to gold, sadden to its winter gown of russet; to note how, as the year declines, the sky covers up its bright summer days and wraps itself in masses of fleecing cloud; how the emerald of the sea grows like beaten steel; and where a band of purple once sank into a rosy mist, there is now only a thin grey line against a pallid sky. The whole population are fishermen and their allies; and all day the able bodied sit upon a great bank of timber, by the side of the lifeboat shed, and smoke, rubbing shoulders together in an uncouth fashion, much as one has seen birds upon a perch. They all know each other, and are good friends after a silent, unexpansive fashion. The property in the fishing-boats is to a certain extent common, and brings them closer together, and, like most Cornishmen, the habit of their lives is serious and a little sad. And they are instinct, too, with a profound natural courtesy towards the stranger, very different from the general distrust and suspicion which we find in the Midland and Northern counties. Rough they are, certainly—stupid, perhaps, according to our Cockney standard of intelligence—but it was such men as these that Kingsley, who had passed his life amongst them, described as *finer men, body and soul, than the landmen*; and of all our seamen and fishers there

are no more stalwart, simple souls to be found in England than those who border the *land of strangers*.

The influence of the place is mesmeric; and as day after day passes, and autumn paces slowly by its road of golden leaves and withered bracken into winter, it grows hourly more difficult to believe in the existence of other life than this. The sea, the sky, the fishermen lounging, the pilchards that never come, the picture on one's easel, the walk after the day's work over moor and downland, the home-coming to the best of inns, with its bright fire and brighter faces of welcome, the dinner with a friend, the smoke and toddy in the evening, and then the night with the wind sighing down the valley—these repeat themselves day by day. Gradually one comes to know something about the people—how poor Sullivan's wife is dying of consumption, and Stewart's boy must be taken to Falmouth to be confirmed, and other matters less serious. And occasionally the men come and talk as we paint, and resting their broad backs against the wall, point out to each other the various objects of the picture, rubbing slow hands over their bristly chins meanwhile. There is a sort of tacit agreement that they are not to establish themselves behind us while we are at work; but sometimes the temptation is too strong to be resisted, and one becomes aware of a shadow on the canvas, and a gruff voice saying, "Not that I want to interrupt you, sir." One old fellow of the patriarchal age, past doing anything but hobble about the beach very slowly, with the help of a couple of sticks, has been exempted from the above restriction, and spends a good portion of his morning breathing heavily into my ear, and giving me details of his career, which presents fewer salient points during its duration of eighty-four years than could be well believed.

"Yes, he has always lived here, and he minds the building of this very place" (a fish-cellar, full of miscellaneous sea-lumber, nets, and crab-pots, "anchors of rusty fluke, and boats updrawn"), "ah, more than fifty years ago." So, with a final wheeze, he departs, to return the next day with the same story; and in the room overhead the one virago of the place recommences scolding and beating her children. "Find it pretty noisy down here, sir?" said a couple of the fishwives, whom I found standing before my easel yesterday. "Her 've a long tongue, and a longer arm, her have." It's the old story of two families—a dead wife leaving young children, and then a new mistress for the house, and a new family, and temper and health alike giving way under the double strain, and the result—that terrible chaos of blows, reproaches, and tears which makes a hell of so many poor men's homes. The boards that roof the cellar are thin, and the voices loud; and having sat under them for three weeks, one is tempted to moralise.

But this is the only seamy side to the village life. Even poor Sullivan's wife, for whom we sent for the priest a few days ago, is dying peacefully ; and her little girl stands, with an anxious wistful face, at the open cottage door, whilst her big father passes in and out, tender as a woman in his care. "She's alive, sir, and that's all." Down the steep little path which winds at the back of the village up to a ledge of rock, against which the great waves hurl themselves for ever vainly, comes the one personage of the place, Mr. —, proprietor of the seine-boats and employer of the fishermen. He is something like Carlyle in appearance, owing the likeness, perhaps, chiefly to his long greatcoat and broad-brimmed hat, and he walks stiffly and slowly beneath his weight of seventy-six years. Thirty-five of them he has spent here on that little shelf of rock (it is literally a shelf, for it ends abruptly in a perpendicular fall of cliff into deep water), doing practically nothing but live. Despite his life, with only these fishermen for companions, traces of a very different society are still clearly visible, touches of geniality and social grace peep out in his dry old manner : and one is not surprised to find in the little cottage on the rocky ledge a portfolio of drawings, and etchings and good pictures upon the walls. All of these, however, and all the furniture of his intellectual and social life, date half a century back : there the man ceased, and what has lived since is merely his outside. Still a pale phantasm of a gentleman and a scholar, he walks in and out the rough folks here, amongst them, but not of them ; and comes and hovers round the easel of a wanderer like myself, wanting, not so much to look at the work, as to hear the old language of books and pictures which he used to speak long ago. After much pressing, he came in one night to chat with us, but was pitifully ill at ease. It seemed to force upon him too keenly the contrast of his present life with that which he had previously known. What it was that scored his face and broke his spirit, and sent him down to live in this unknown fishing-hamlet far from the ways of men, who shall say ? But he intensifies the stillness of the place : and when his tall figure is seen coming down the path of a morning, even the sunlight seems to fall more quietly upon his rusty coat, and the noise of the water to be almost hushed.

And so the days go on, with life lying behind and before, and twenty miles off the train waiting to carry all who will back to the great city. Morning after morning out of the same silvery sky shines the wistful sun, and the great grey plain of the sea stretches softly away to the horizon. Still the pilchard weathercock points to the long-expected shoal ; still the fishermen lounge, and growl, and smoke ; still our pictures grow slowly day by day amid the comments, flattering and otherwise, of the villagers ; still we take

long walks over the moorland, or to where the Lizard lights can be seen streaming out into the waning sunset. After all, one cannot photograph an atmosphere, and it is a photograph only which I am trying to give you. A crude, literal picture of an environment of humble life, of toils and duties which there are

“None to praise, and very few to love,”

but which is, after the rivalries and jealousies of London, almost like *the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.*



TIS NOT THE HABIT MAKES THE MONK

G. E. WATTS, R. A.

"We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good."—ROMOLA.

"I read a record deeper than the skin."—THE SPANISH GYPSY.

THE PAINTING OF GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS, R.A.: A COMPARATIVE CRITICISM.¹



HERE are certain poets whose verse is so melodious, whose meaning is so obvious, and whose sympathies are so universal, as to attract at once all who listen to them. And there are others whom we only grow to admire slowly, as our knowledge increases—whose language sounds often at first uncouth in our ears—whose thoughts and emotions have to be searched for diligently, and pondered deeply before they are understood; but who repay the effort of their students with a richer harmony than is yielded by those who pipe but as the linnets sing. Without wishing to depreciate the bird-like strains of the first of these, I may be permitted to suggest (as Longfellow did in his *Singers*), that they give to youth the joy that their more thoughtful contemporaries give to manhood. And though, as Greg said, "the bees and the butterflies alike are happy," yet they are happy in different ways and from different causes. Is it a fanciful idea that there should be pictorial art of an analogous kind to the less superficially attractive aspects of poetry and music? I do not see why we are entitled to refuse the same amount of time to the comprehension of a great picture, that we should give without hesitation to the understanding of a sonnet; or why we should expect

¹ Written in the February number of the *Contemporary Review*, 1882, on the occasion of a collection of Mr. Watts' paintings being exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery. Some further articles on the same subject were published by me at this period in the *Times* and *Spectator*.

a composition which has probably taken months if not years of thought and labour to produce, to reveal all its meaning to us as we stroll hurriedly round a picture gallery. A wise man once said that no great book required much less time in the reading than the author had taken in the writing, and a picture, after all, is but an open book, where those who have eyes to see *can read strange matters*.

This essay attempts to explain the characteristic qualities of Mr. Watts' art, to note its imperfections as well as its excellencies, and to consider what is its value and its teaching when taken as a whole. That such an attempt, made at such a time, must of necessity fail of complete success, no one will feel more strongly than the present writer. However posterity judges, it will not be from the point of view of to-day, and *that* verdict it is hopeless to anticipate. Without attempting, however, to forecast what will be the ultimate value assigned to Mr. Watts' painting, we may be pardoned for suggesting the chief aims which the artist appears to have had in view, the chief peculiarities of his style, and the chief points of difference between his work and that of other famous English painters. And if in this latter connection I have to speak with seeming disparagement of those who are high in public favour, I would remind my readers that the comparative criticism referred to must only be considered to be a part of the truth. It were manifestly impossible, within the limits of a Review article, to give more than a general description of the aims and methods of the artists, who are incidentally referred to for the purpose of comparison, and such general description must frequently do but scant justice to their full merit.

In one respect the opportunity afforded by the present collection at the Grosvenor Gallery is almost, if not quite, unique. It is, as far as I am aware, the first time that anything like a complete collection of an artist's pictures have been exhibited in his lifetime, and with his assistance and approval. It is the more significant when we consider that the works in this collection extend over a period of nearly half a century, and that the painter has almost reached the allotted age of man. This exhibition may well be considered as a question put by the artist to those who are interested in art, and demanding a plain answer; and I can only plead for the answer that is attempted here, that it is at least an honest one. It is needless to point out that there is one vital difficulty in estimating the works of a living artist that does not exist in the criticism of one who has *passed over to the majority*—the difficulty, that is, of describing without offence the influences to which his art has been subject through his life; the way in which circumstances have aided, thwarted, or modified the development of his genius. For all imperfection arising from such a cause as this, I can but beg my readers' forbearance, as I shall not attempt to note any such details.

Mr. Watts' training as an artist appears to have been a somewhat desultory one. He went, first of all, to the Schools of the Royal Academy, but gained little good there—at all events, if we may trust his own words : *Finding there was no teaching, I very soon ceased to attend.*

But in the year 1842 he gained a first-class prize of £300 for a cartoon illustrative of *Caractacus led in Triumph through the Streets of Rome*. This was in one of the competitions held in Westminster Hall, which were instituted by the Government for the purpose of discovering whether there was any artistic talent applicable to the requirements of fresco. The subsequent history of this cartoon is a somewhat singular one. For the design was sold with the other successful compositions to a private purchaser, and was ultimately cut up into pieces which were disposed of separately. The only portion of this cartoon at present discoverable is in the possession of Sir Walter James. With the money gained by this competition the young artist went to Italy, and there devoted himself to the study of the older Italian masters; and only returned to England in time to gain another prize of £500 for an oil painting representing *Alfred inciting the English to prevent the Landing of the Danes*. This work was ultimately purchased for the nation, and has since been in one of the waiting-rooms of the House of Lords. It is remarkable for the vigour of its composition, and for a certain purity of colour, which has something in common with the clear atmosphere of the early pre-Raphaelites; but the chief motive of the picture is evidently derived from Tintoretto, to the influence of which master the bold modelling of the figures is evidently due.

The influence of these early works in fresco has never altogether faded, and traces of it may be found throughout Mr. Watts' latest work. To this time and its associations may be traced the large manner, the bold conceptions, the dignity of form and gesture, and the somewhat sombre motive of such pictures as *Time and Death*, *Time and Oblivion*, *Love and Death*, and many others; to this, also, is due, in considerable measure, many of the faults which offend the casual spectator of Mr. Watts' work. Before, however, we dwell upon this subject it is interesting to note that the effects of Mr. Watts' foreign study showed themselves more in the increased scope of his conceptions than in devotion to any special master. During his stay in Italy he seems to have been more receptive of general impressions than actually engaged in studying the technical powers of any individual painter, and he at no time lost sight of that sculpturesque ideal of art which is evident even in his earliest works. The only exception to this is one grand picture, entitled the *Illusions of Love*, painted in 1849. In it there is more of the actual *painter's* quality, as opposed to the sculptor's, than in any other work by this

artist, and in many ways it rivals the master, of whom it is a manifest though unconscious echo. In what may be called lusciousness of colouring this picture stands alone; the glowing tints mix together in the most exquisite harmony; the paint seems to be floated on to the canvas, rather than put on with a brush. It is an *immorally* beautiful picture, and has the atmosphere of youth and strength and passionate desire floating round it like a cloud. And yet there is nothing more certain than that, had the artist gone on painting in this manner, he would never have become truly great. For greatness in art never comes by repetition; no matter how accurate, it must be essentially new, if it exists at all. From this abyss into which so many good men have fallen, Mr. Watts was saved by two causes. The one was, that he was too intellectual and earnest a man to rest contented with mere technical perfection; the other was his devotion to Greek sculpture. If it be true, as is no doubt the case, that he would have in many ways *painted* better had he confined himself to painting alone, it is true also that though his pictures would have been more perfect, they would have been less beautiful—they would have lost in dignity of form more than they gained in beauty of detail. And another point in this connection must be briefly touched upon. There is one difference between the best sculpture and the best painting the world has ever known which is very commonly overlooked—the difference in its appeal to the purely human sympathies. Painting may claim, and, indeed, always has claimed, our attention for kings, prophets, and warriors, martyrs, angels, and madonnas, surrounded with every circumstance of their glory. Its magnificence of colour, its elaborate combinations of form, its sublimity of conception, are powerful, to some degree, to blind us to the purely human fact that lies at the root of the conception, and we may go away from many a glorious picture, thinking more of its technique and accessories than of aught else. But sculpture has none of these diversities to attract us from its main fact. At its very finest it can but give us a perfect human body, instinct with one simple emotion. Unless, therefore, its appeal is founded upon what we all recognise as true and worthy, it must indubitably fail. It is this quality which has been present in Mr. Watts' work throughout his life—this power of, so to speak, stripping the *soul-wrappings* off his subject, and getting at its real essence. And there is one point on which it has affected his paintings very markedly. If you study carefully the best Grecian sculpture, you cannot avoid being powerfully impressed by the fact of the strange impersonality of the statues themselves; the absence therefrom of all the little tiny individual details that make up personality. I wish to guard against being misunderstood to mean by this that they lack character; on the contrary, there is the fullest and clearest expression of character in each face, but it is character in essentials, not followed out into

intricacies and eccentricities—there are no pollarded willows or grafted roses amongst that noble company. An examination of Mr. Watts' paintings reveals the fact that, in this matter, his practice is identical with that of the ancient sculptors—his characters are the most impersonal that can be conceived; it is not only from their faces, but from their bodies and movements, that every personal detail is avoided or merged in the general impression. This would not, perhaps, be wonderful, if the artist were to obtain the effect by the adoption and repetition of a certain type, such as, for instance, the type of face adopted by Mr. Burne-Jones from Botticelli, or the type of drapery adopted by the same master from Mantegna. But there is nothing of this kind to be noted in Mr. Watts' work. Take, as an example, the pictures of *Daphne* and *Psyche*, the only two entirely nude female figures in the exhibition. Here the faces and the characteristics of the bodies are as different as it is well possible for them to be, and yet the same impersonal air is clearly over them both. The one stands straight and stiff by her broken lamp, with a sorrow as yet unrealised upon her face; she is scarcely more than a child—her

“Poor girl's blood,
Scarce sun-warmed yet with summer”;

her head droops, her arms hang listlessly by her sides, her whole figure expresses dejection and innocent grief; the thin grey light of early dawn wraps her body as a mist. The other is a woman in the pride of her beauty, her limbs glowing with warm colour, her body thrown a little backward, her arm, raised above her head, touching the myrtle into which she is to be changed—a picture of infinite beauty and power,

“Mixed with scent of roses over-ripe,
And murmur of the summer afternoon!”

The consideration of this peculiar quality of our painter's art is closely connected with the old controversy between Realism and Idealism, in the artistic, not the metaphysical, use of those terms. To which camp does Mr. Watts belong? I should say to neither, or to both; and this may, perhaps, be made best evident by a few examples. A realist is simply a pre-Raphaelite, one who paints things as well as he can, in a manner as like as possible to what he sees or imagines to have been the case. And idealists are those who think they can improve Nature by alteration, who like to paint events and actions, not as they are or were, but as they prettily might have been. Such is really the substance of the famous dictum of Mr. Ruskin on pre-Raphaelitism, and will do equally well for our purpose. But these words Realism and Idealism have got mixed up in a good many people's minds with imagination and the lack thereof; till, perhaps, most people who use them in art, give to every work which is at all

poetical or imaginative the name of ideal, and to every literal copy of Nature the name of real. The difficulty of using either word correctly with regard to Mr. Watts lies in the fact that, though he is in his main points a decided pre-Raphaelite, as all of his imaginative works prove, yet his practice, to some extent, is that of the idealist's, inasmuch as he translates and generalises many of the facts he attempts to deal with. Thus, for instance, in dealing with the nude model, the last thing which Mr. Watts does in his pictures is to suggest details of his subject as, say, Mr. Alma-Tadema suggested them in the painting of *The Sculptor's Model*, exhibited at the Academy a few years since;¹ or as Mr. Millais did, in his picture of *The Knight Errant*; or as, to take a better example than either, Mr. Lefebvre suggests them in all his later works. It is excessively difficult to explain exactly in what difference of treatment this result consists; it is, at least, as much due to a method of mental action, as a method of handling the brush, and the pencil, that produces the effect. Artists regard (what they call in studios) the *figure* in very different lights. To one man it is a collection of muscles, another sees chiefly the framework on which the muscles are stretched, a third sees only the form which some pet old masters saw, and models his conception from that, another sees nothing under the skin, and another sees only a woman stripped of her clothes. Now, any or all of these methods are practised in modern art, and all are wrong; neither muscles, skin, bones, the treatment of the old masters, nor the representation of an individual woman, is the true manner to study the figure. The fact to be studied lies, not only on the outside of the body, or even the inside, but it comprehends also that which makes the body noble. Call it what we like—sense, spirit, intellect, soul—that is the added factor that removes the painting of the nude from the region of the hospital to the region of the studio. If a painter does not see that in the human body, his pictures bear inevitable witness to the fact, and, no matter how beautifully they are painted, can never be otherwise than offensive. Ruskin said, long since, the *souls of men* are to be *studied in their bodies, not their bodies only*. *Mulready's drawings from the nude are more bestial and degraded than the worst grotesques of the Byzantine or even the Indian image-makers.*

Amongst our other great painters, there are only four who can be said to seriously attempt to paint the nude figure: these are, Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr. Edward Burne-Jones, Mr. E. J. Poynter, and, occasionally, Mr. Albert Moore and Mr. Alma-Tadema, the latter a Belgian by birth. Of these artists, Sir Frederick Leighton's method is probably the hardest to characterise in a few words, if only because it combines such various qualities. This most accomplished artist has studied in the chief schools of England, France,

¹ The model's feet, for instance, were quite red with standing in the cold.

Germany, and Italy; and one result of the various teaching he has undergone has been to make him a sort of artistic Achitophel. He has been too much taught to have learnt anything worth the learning; like some of the unfortunate youths who take high honours at their university, he has more knowledge than he knows what to do with; and while capable of painting anything in any style, he feels little inclination to use his powers for purposes of expression. The contours of a woman's back, the softness of a woman's limbs, the sweetness of a woman's eyes, and the languor of a woman's love—these are nearly all the subjects that occupy his pencil, and, as might be expected, the continual pruning away of human imperfections and human emotions to which he has subjected his pictures, has resulted in their having but little interest, and even in the best sense of the word, but little beauty. The loveliness that "comes from no secret of proportion, but from the secret of deep human sympathy," is alien to Sir Frederick Leighton's work, and he keeps, as far as his pictures tell us, no corner of his heart for "the few in the fore-front of the great multitude whose faces we know, whose hands we touch, for whom we have to make way in kindly courtesy." This want of sympathy shows clearly enough in the artist's treatment of the figure, which, with all its delicate correctness, has a smoothness and softness that are not of Nature. Under the delicate peach-bloom of his maidens' cheeks, and the clear brown skin of his athletes, there is felt the same want of reality; his lovers whispering in the twilight, as in last year's Academy picture, call forth little emotion; they are as unhuman in their perfection as the voices of the earth and air in Shelley's *Prometheus*.

Hands that have done no work, and hearts that have known no sorrow—soft robes that have never been soiled with rain or torn by storm—a blue sky above their heads, and a fruitful earth beneath their feet, and an atmosphere of the land where it seems always afternoon—such are the actors and their surroundings of Sir Frederick Leighton's later works; is it any wonder that they have little appeal for us who live, *girt by the beating of the steely sea*, in an age which has certainly little in common with that of Arcady?

In fact, Sir Frederick Leighton plays upon the human body with as much skill and with as much indifference as a practised musician, and one day, perhaps, he will be astonished to learn that

"There is much marvellous music in this little pipe"

that he cannot compel to utterance.

With Mr. Poynter the case is very different. He stands, indeed, with regard to his art, almost at the opposite pole to Sir

Frederick Leighton. His training has been of the most insular kind ; his sympathies with modern art are very slight ; his power is of a peculiar, hard, resolute character ; his draughtsmanship has never succeeded in making itself harmonious in general effect ; what the French call *les grands contours du dessin*, are singularly absent from his drawing of the figure, which commonly presents us with a man or a woman whose limbs seem to have come together somewhat fortuitously, and to be on the point of dislocation. With all this there is in this artist's work an impression of earnestness and well-directed effort that goes far to render it of real value. If some of his figures look as if

"Some of Nature's journeymen had made men,
And not made them well,"

nevertheless, there is generally to be found in each some real truth of action or form, and he is, perhaps, the only living English artist who at the present time habitually struggles with the problems of drawing presented by the muscles when in violent action. It is not my purpose to give a description of Mr. Poynter's merits, but to point out that his conception of the figure is inadequate for two reasons—of which, indeed, either would be sufficient. It is not beautiful form ; there is some personal incapacity to understand or to care for beauty of outline, and its place is supplied, as best it may be, by industry and by delineation of varied action. Take any quiescent figure of Mr. Poynter's you like as an example, and examine it carefully, and you will inevitably find this lack of grace. The quality is one that evidently does not appeal to the painter. The second reason is that Mr. Poynter's conception of the human figure is not his own, but is borrowed from Michael Angelo, and he has, like most imitators, copied rather the accidents than the essence of his master's greatness. I cannot spare time to dwell upon this characteristic ; it is sufficient here to say that it causes him to give undue prominence to the muscles and their action, and is in no small measure answerable for the uglinesses of form which are of frequent occurrence in his work.

Mr. Edward Burne-Jones is an artist of very different calibre from either of the above-named, and one whose most delightful qualities are little connected with his drawing of the figure, which is, indeed, in his work, almost always partially draped. But as he is at the present time the representative man of the pre-Raphaelites, and as his work is in its way of very exquisite quality, we must say a few words upon his art.

The reading of life which Mr. Burne-Jones' compositions show is as essentially mediæval Italian in its character as Sir Frederick Leighton's is degenerate Greek. The glory of the body itself, and the fear of the body itself, is the keynote to these two painters' work



AN ARAB SOLDIER. J. Tapiro.

From the original Drawing in the collection of the late William Quilter.

—the conception, respectively, of the athlete and the ascetic. But the curious turn of mind which has, in Mr. Burne-Jones, grafted the passions of the athlete upon the mind of the ascetic, is one for which we can scarcely find a parallel in the history of art. Never, probably, before has an artist devoted himself to the representation of love and beauty with so shuddering a conscience, and so overpowering a sympathy. Not only loving but *love-sick* are all his characters—their love oppresses as a physical suffering—their heads and bodies droop beneath it.

We have had discussions *ad nauseam* as to the morality or immorality of Mr. Burne-Jones' pictures, and I certainly do not intend to enter upon one here; but I wish to point out how incompatible with any worthy rendering of the human figure is the state of mind that I have just hinted at above. In art as in religion it is true that perfect love casteth out fear, and the mediæval conception of love was, as Kingsley says in more than one of his books, a wholly vitiated one, founded upon fear and ignorance. For the rest, Mr. Burne-Jones' study and drawing of the nude have not been carried out to anything like the same extent as the masters of whom we have been speaking, and he has never attained mastery of the contours of the figure as a whole. Something of the archaicism of Botticelli and Mantegna clings to him still, and, to go no further than one of his peculiarities, he is apt to reduce both men and women to a type which, while partaking of the character of both, is a perfect representation of neither.

This somewhat long digression was necessary to show why I rank Mr. Watts' painting of the nude figure, in certain essential respects, above that of any of our English artists, since it comprises a greater number of the more vital requisites of figure-painting than is to be found elsewhere in England; nor do I know any living artist, with perhaps the single exception of Henner, who excels Watts in this respect. The vital requisites to which allusion is made are these, arranged as nearly as possible in order of value—dignity of form and gesture (attained by the most thorough knowledge, combined with the power of separating and rejecting all irrelevant and incompatible details); purity, the result, not of one quality of mind or hand, but of habitual thought; power, the result of working habitually on a large scale, and on subjects of adequate importance. These three are the most essential qualities in figure-painting, and in all these Mr. Watts' work leaves little or nothing to be desired. His failures, indeed, are intimately connected with his merits, since they almost invariably arise from the undertaking of some conception too involved in meaning, or too gigantic in size, to be adequately carried out in oil painting. Such works as the enormous head and bust of *Satan* in this gallery, and the still larger composition entitled

Time and Oblivion, are in their very nature unsuited for oil-pictures. They are incomplete dreams upon subjects unadapted for pictorial representation in any complete manner, and should have been done, if done at all, only in the roughest description of fresco, over some dark archway, or on the apse of some great cathedral. Not that they do not possess many great beauties (the gesture, for instance, with which Oblivion sweeps her dark robes round her face as she hurries towards the grave, is one of the grandest pieces of expressional form I remember to have seen), but that those beauties only serve to make us regret the necessary incompleteness of the whole. Again, few people, I think, can have noticed the half-nude figure entitled *Arcadia*, without feeling that it strikes one of the few false notes in this master's work. The reason is manifest: we only dwell in *Arcadia* once in our lives, and never after the questions of life and thought have begun to perplex and sadden us. Mr. Watts' female figure has none of the innocent gladness and belief that she should typify. He has tried hard to make her glad, and has only succeeded in making her embarrassed; it is one of the few occasions where he has not felt his subject. Such failures are not numerous; out of the two hundred pictures here there are hardly twenty that miss their point in meaning, and nearly all of these are examples in which the artist has departed from what we may perhaps be allowed to call his usual line of business. A thoughtful man playing at thoughtlessness, is a very charming spectacle if successful, but approaches dangerously near to failure. Few of those who habitually feel the significance of life can lay aside their knowledge even for an hour.

And this brings me to the consideration of the chief imperfections in our Master's work; imperfections of which the presence is manifest to all who look at the pictures, though few take the trouble to thoroughly investigate their shortcomings, or seek for their origin. The fact remains, that of the *perfection* which is the mark of the greatest art, we find little trace here. Hardly any of the pictures strike us with the irresistible impressions of rightness that we gain from work which has been executed with perfect knowledge. They are rather like the actions of Dorothea Casaubon, the "offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur, ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity." The purely artistic side of art—the use, that is, in absolute perfection of the brush, the pencil, and the colour—has always been the side of his work which has had least attraction for Mr. Watts. Caring very greatly for the result, he has never—or, at least, so I think—cared quite sufficiently for the means whereby it could be best attained. Both in thought and action, the superficial has had for him little fascination; and the life-long study of means, which so many artists make the occupation and even aim of their lives, has been to him only a stumbling-block. It was the habit of his mind, as it was of

Savonarola's, to conceive great things, and to feel that he was the man to do them ; and this has been at once his weakness and his strength. His weakness, in urging him to the continual adoption of great undertakings without reference to his powers of health and the circumstances of his life ; and his strength, in encouraging him under the neglect of his finest works. It is a somewhat pathetic little line that appears under most of the largest works now exhibiting at the Grosvenor Gallery, though it only contains four words—Little Holland House Gallery ; for Little Holland House is, I need hardly tell my readers, Mr. Watts' own dwelling, and the pictures therein are his. Trying to trace the artist's mind in his pictures, I think, shows us something more as to the causes of his comparative failures. He is a dreamer with a purpose. And, alas ! dreamers should have no motive. *Kubla Khan* would not be improved by the addition of a moral. Perhaps the difference between the greatest art and that which just fails to be the greatest (leaving out for the moment all question of technique) is that the first is rather a motive power to great thoughts, and that the second embodies, or strives to embody, some special thesis—a difference that may be exemplified by that between a symphony by Beethoven and an opera by Wagner.

In all Mr. Watts' large works, the thought has predominated over the expression, or at least the thought has been enforced to the utmost of the painter's power. And it is as distinctly an error for art to be markedly moral as it is for it to be the reverse. With stronger health, and with a slightly less sombre habit of mind, Mr. Watts' works would have swept away their excess of thought, in their splendour of colour and composition. Had the artist not taken life quite so hardly, his pictures would have gained to a very considerable extent. As it is, there is scarcely one of the finest of the imaginative works which is not either distinctly mournful in subject or depressed in spirit. And this is shown with wonderful clearness on an examination of the landscapes. We can fancy some robust squire saying, "Surely this cannot be meant for England ; this sad, grey, green country, without life, or colour, or air, whose leaden skies hang heavily over dull brown trees, and even the green fields seem to have a livid unwholesome look." And yet these landscapes are beautiful, if we take them simply for what they are—notes of depression cast into the shape of pictures. With much of the poetry of Corot, Millet, and Rousseau, but with a deeper, more satisfying harmony of colour, they combine a solemnity of feeling which is none the less remarkable for its being evidently unsought, and they are curiously free from the morbid feeling of such landscapes as those of Mr. Cecil Lawson, or the academicism of M. Legros. The matter may be shortly summed up by saying that the life of beauty has had no existence for Mr. Watts, unless it has been

of such a kind as to enable him to connect it in his own mind, or in the mind of others, with great thoughts or interests. The one order of beauty which, as George Eliot said in *Adam Bede*, "seems made to turn the head, not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women," has had no attraction for him, or at least not until he could find in it some trace of emotion, some hint of suffering, or thwarted circumstance. Thus the beauty of a woman's flesh, which may probably be considered the most purely sensuous phase of beauty in the world, has almost invariably been ignored by him; while the lines of her form, which he was able to connect with Greek art, have been his greatest delight. Continually in his pictures do we find the flesh of a crude and almost repulsive colour, and possessing none of the finer qualities of surface. With these few remarks upon Mr. Watts' shortcomings, I must leave the subject; but before proceeding, I must, at the risk of wearying my readers, say a few words upon the peculiarities of colour and arrangement in his pictures.

Like most masters who have been engaged in fresco, he uses but little medium in his work, and paints comparatively dry. In this respect his later pictures differ considerably from his earlier work, and the difference may perhaps be understood when I say that they rather resemble Tintoretto than Titian. One of his chief theories in painting is to depend a great deal upon the purity of his ground colour; and this he always strives to preserve or restore throughout the painting. One result of this method is that his newly-finished works are very frequently of somewhat dead and heavy appearance, and only show their full qualities of colour when, after the lapse of a year or two, they come to be varnished. It will be noticed by the visitors to the Grosvenor Gallery, that, chiefly from this cause, many of the early pictures are apparently much richer in colour than those which have been lately executed. Mr. Watts has also considerably modified his scheme of colour of late years. This has altered from bright to rich, and a certain quality of tint, which might almost be called *garish*, has entirely disappeared. One of the chief peculiarities of the artist is the very full range of his present colour harmonies, for in each of the three primaries he seems to find almost equal delight. Perhaps the majority of his works are chiefly concerned with modifications of yellowish brown and blue, but he is likewise very skilful in the introduction of scarlet and crimson draperies, as, for instance, in the great portrait of Sir Frederick Leighton, exhibited in the Academy of 1881, and one of his latest pictures (not exhibited at the Grosvenor) is a study in various tones of red. The drapery, however, which the artist has employed lately for some of his chief pictures, such as those of *Love and Death*, and *Orpheus and Eurydice*, is of a peculiar greenish grey, and is perhaps the least satis-

factory note of colour throughout his work. When employed on large surfaces, as in the pictures above mentioned, it gives a cold, monumental character to the work, which, though dramatically appropriate to the subject, is decidedly injurious to the beauty of the picture. We can hardly tell what will be the exact effect of age upon these grey robes, but the employment of so much cold colour must always be injurious to the effect of the picture, and throughout the work of the great colourists of the Venetian and Florentine schools we rarely meet with tertiary hues disposed in such masses as to practically form the keynote of the picture.

In main effect Mr. Watts' work may perhaps be best described as bearing the same relation to Reynolds as that of Tintoretto to Titian, and indeed this parallel would hold good in several ways. His most peculiar powers in this respect are shown in his mastery over low tones of grey and green, as, for instance, in the picture of *The Dove returning to the Ark*, or the *Psyche* alluded to above. In the management of these shades he may be called emphatically a great colourist, one of the greatest; and if I hesitate to bestow this title upon him with regard to all his work, it is only because his pictures, which are constructed on a scheme of full colour, seem to me to lack the joyousness and serenity that always accompany the work of really splendid colourists. A few shades of the prison-house, always linger over their brightness; there are to be found in every one notes of imperfection, weariness, and—I had almost said—failure. In several, too, of the earlier works, where brightness has been chiefly aimed at, and where the colours employed are kept comparatively pure, there is a lack of that deep satisfying lustre, as of a cut-open precious stone, that marks the greatest work.

Those of my readers who are acquainted with the works of Venetian masters, will be at no loss to understand my meaning, and for those who are not some hint of it may be gathered by them if they remember some of the early work of Mr. Millais, and the pictures of Mr. Burne-Jones, Mr. Holman Hunt, and Mr. Rossetti. Or, perhaps, a more perfect example still (more perfect, because unallied with deficiencies of feeling or perversities of mind) is to be found in the early pictures of Mr. Hook, R.A. Such compositions as *The Trawlers* and *Luff, Boy!* have all the richness of the Venetian colouring, if not all the splendour. To this beauty Mr. Watts has never been able to attain, though in one or two pictures—for instance, the work in the Grosvenor Gallery of *A Lady playing the Piano*, and the *Illusions of Life*—we find some approach to it.

Into the causes of this failure to attain the power which is the

rarest, and, I hold, the most precious of all artistic capabilities, it is needless to inquire closely. I may, however, point out that the colour harmonies of Mr. Watts' work fail, where they fail at all, with a frank confession of imperfection that is very far removed from total failure. Indeed, in his colouring, as in his draughtsmanship, and in the composition of his pictures, this artist's frankness of speech is at once his greatest charm and the occasion of his severest criticism. If any pictures ever told a spectator that their painter saw heights to which he could not approach, depths which he could not fathom, and meanings which he could not explain, these compositions tell the tale; and as the majority of people admire the cocksureness of Macaulay more than the pregnant hints of Carlyle, so do most picture-lovers prefer artists whose pictorial speech is clear and unhesitating, and who feel no incapacity because they (like people who are short-sighted) have a keener vision for little things near at hand. There are few topics more alluring to the majority of commonplace minds than the imperfections of the great in any walk of life, and it was not to be supposed that the general public, which understood neither the aims nor the difficulties which guided and perplexed Mr. Watts in his pictures, would refrain from harsh criticism of an artist who confessed himself only a student in his art. And this became more certainly the case owing to Mr. Watts' practice of exhibiting great works in an incomplete state—a practice which, however objectionable in itself, was in this case the only alternative to not exhibiting at all—an alternative which, I may remark in passing, was frequently chosen.

I have said very little about Mr. Watts' peculiarities of drawing, and shall hardly touch upon that subject, both because it is one which can hardly be rendered interesting to the general reader, and because any criticism of its technicalities that would be worthy of the name, would stretch beyond endurable limits an article which is, I fear, already too long. If it were possible to characterise his method shortly with reference to draughtsmanship, I should say that the leading quality was a large pre-Raphaelitism—pre-Raphaelitism, that is, divested of its eccentricities and laborious shortcomings, and directed to the heart of the subject-matter rather than to its outside. It is quite certain, I think, that the body of man is regarded by the artist much after the fashion of Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*—it is only "the garment thou see'st him by"; and this method of thought affects the method of the hand, and gives a certain amount of subtle generalisation to the artist's compositions. Much as a man who can read never looks at a book, even unopened on a shelf, quite in the same way as a man who cannot, so an artist who can read the soul, cannot ever draw form quite in the same way as one who reads and draws the body only. Some foolish critics



A SUMMER SHOWER.

C. E. PERUGINI

have spoken about not liking this figure's attitude, or that figure's limbs, or the other figure's flesh-painting, not apparently remembering that, in most cases, the works to which they were objecting were wholly unfinished, and that, moreover, an artist may fairly claim to be judged by the mass of his work, especially when it is all exhibited together, as in the Grosvenor Gallery. It is as absurd to talk or write about Mr. Watts not knowing the proportions of the human figure, as it would have been to tell Mr. Street that he did not know the elements of Gothic, or to explain to Mr. Huxley that he was ignorant of the theories of evolution. And the absurdity culminates when proceeding, as such criticisms generally do proceed, from critics who never drew a figure in their lives. Of all things in the world to criticise with any chance of being right, the drawing of the figure is the hardest, even in its most straightforward kind, and when it comes to criticising generalised form—as opposed to anatomical form—it needs half a lifetime spent in actual study of the nude, to tell when, how, and where a drawing is wrong—and right.

I made, in an earlier portion of this article, a comparison between the treatment of the figure by Mr. Watts, and by some other of the greatest English living painters—somewhat perhaps to the disadvantage of the latter; in justice, I must say a word or two to explain the comparative rank of Mr. Watts as a draughtsman, and, as I have hinted at his excellencies, mention his defect. It is, undoubtedly, a deficiency of delicacy in outline, a tendency to substitute masses for refinement of form, and to lose sight of the beauty which comes from what is generally known as subtle drawing. Much of this is connected inseparably with his methods of thought and conception of art; but he would probably never have been able to gain a delicate beauty of outline such as we see in Sir Frederick Leighton's work—outlines, that is, where each line seems dependent upon the other, and where all blend together in perfect unity.¹ Or, to take another instance, he would never be able to touch the tenderness of drawing with which Mr. Burne-Jones executes his pencil heads. In this latter instance, the quality of the work is as indefinable as the scent of a flower, or the touch upon the violin of a great musician. We perceive the effect, and that is all. In Mr. Watts' best drawing there is something of ruggedness, as of one who, after a day spent in hot battle, should come home and try to touch softly the face of his sleeping child—the hand is kind and true, but it is heavy, and has been trained to sterner work. These shortcomings are visible, too, in his treatment of drapery, which is always well-disposed, but has an appearance as of the sharp marks of the chisel left upon an unfinished statue. Sweeping finely

¹ I think now that the foregoing statement needs modification."

in the main contours, it hardly clings to and emphasises the form of the body; with much of the nobility of draperies in the Greek statues, there is little of their mystery, intricacy, and softness. Those who will think of the work of Mr. Albert Moore, will understand my meaning when I say that Mr. Watts' work is, in this respect, singularly imperfect for one who in other respects so thoroughly understands and preserves the spirit of Greek art.

But it is a curious fact that much attention bestowed upon draperies, and great excellence in their delineation, has always been a sign of artists whose sympathies were less wide than they were accurate—who preferred form to spirit. Compare, for instance, the works of the Byzantines and Cimabue with that of Giotto—the work of Mantegna with that of Andrea del Sarto—the work of Carpaccio with Bellini, and that of Veronese with Tintoretto.

Perhaps the truth of the matter is that the imaginative faculty, when existing at all, can only exist as an imperious master, and will not suffer the introduction into its domain of more than a certain amount of alien matter. A man who *can create*, either in poetry, painting, or music, is hardly the master of how he will create, or what—except in those rarest of all cases in which, as in Shakespeare, the imaginative power is balanced by an equal amount of intellectual judgment. Intensest feeling, and the power to weigh and distribute that feeling with perfect impartiality, is, I suppose, the highest outcome of genius, and gives us a Dante or Shakespeare. Neither of these is our painter, but an imperfect man, struggling with the utterance of noble conceptions, and experiencing many a bad fall in the attempt. Not for that should we despise his partial achievements, or forget Blake's wise dictum that

“The errors of a wise man make your rule,
Rather than the perfections of a fool.”

Mr. Watts' painting is open to the same reproach: “erring and imperfect,” as Mr. Stevenson says in *Virginibus Puerisque*, “but filled with a struggling radiancy of better things, and adorned with ineffective qualities.”

I must say a few words as to Mr. Watts' treatment of the various imaginative subjects upon which he has chiefly expended his energies—subjects which may be roughly classified as Religious and Poetic. His manner of dealing with the former of these subjects is essentially an undogmatic one, and is, perhaps, a typical example of the present state of uncertainty and unrest. As far as I can read these pictures, they shadow forth a state of mind in which

the great problems of life and death, redemption and salvation, have received no adequate solution, but in which Christianity and its teachings form the symbols through which the artist expresses his belief in a Creator, and in some moral government of the universe. Such works as *Dedicated to all the Churches*, the *Sketches for the Progress of Creation*, *The Creation and Temptation of Eve*, *The Return of the Dove*, and others, illustrate the Christian legend with an amount of sorrowful unrest that has nothing in it of dogmatic assurance. They seem rather symbolical appeals to some unshaped faith, than records of facts in which belief is certain; but, however this may be (and I am far from wishing to draw any conclusion from the pictures that is at all strained), there can be no doubt that the subjects are treated sadly, and the personal motive of the pictures is depression. I do not remember a sadder picture than that of the dove resting on the stump of a tree, after her last flight from the ark,¹ and the one which shows her return with the olive branch, is almost equally dreary. In the other pictures the sadness is impersonal, but they all seem troubled, and the rendering of each scene frequently dwells upon the element of disturbance, the motive of the conception being that which Newman hints at, in the following quotation from the *Apologia* :—

“Starting, then, with the being of a God, which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence,—though, when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape, I find a difficulty in doing so in word and figure to my satisfaction,—I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself.”

If we turn for a moment from the religious or quasi-religious pictures, to the few where Mr. Watts has taken for subjects the incidents of modern life, we see this bias of thought still more strongly. *Found Drowned*, *Under a Dry Archway*, *The Irish Famine*—such are the subjects of the artist's choice, and their treatment is characterised by the sternest realism. No modern painter with whom I am acquainted has touched with so unsparing, and yet so sympathetic a hand, the problem of woman's degradation, and we must notice as a curious fact that, in the treatment of this subject, Mr. Watts' work becomes, for the first time, purely realistic. His largest picture of this kind, another example of

¹ This picture was not included in the Grosvenor Gallery collection.

Found Drowned, is not in the Gallery. This is an early and comparatively hardly painted work, but possesses many good qualities, and that interest that attaches to plain speech on a subject where folks are habitually reticent. But the picture of the woman dying in the dawn under the archway, which is here exhibited, is far finer, and, despite the almost ghastly misery of the subject's face, far more beautiful.¹ Underneath, there hangs a portrait study of a fair young girl, with not a line of trouble marring the softness of her face, or the roundness of her cheek; not a fold of her fresh dress crumpled or awry. She is in profile, her sweet lips parted as if in the act of speaking—delicate, fresh, and fair, and sweet as English air can make her. She might stand there, in her gentle beauty,

“ Whole ages long, the whole world through,
For preachings of what God can do.”

And above hangs the picture of the tramp, crouching against the cold masonry of the arch, and shivering closer into her wretched shawl. The juxtaposition—one, we suppose, of pure chance—is very striking, but it is good to remember that the same hand painted both works, and that, perhaps, if the artist had not felt sympathy for the misery of the one, he had never been able to express the purity and grace of the other.

The problem of such a contrast is too grave to be touched upon here; let me rather say a few words upon the large, imaginative works, which form so striking an element in this exhibition. Some of them are finished pictures, but most of them can hardly be described as more than the first statements of the thought which the painter intends to illustrate. They may be divided roughly into works of fancy and works of thought—the former being attempts at striking a lighter chord of meaning; the latter expressing chiefly the artist's habitual mood. Of these classes we may say at once, that the first is the least attractive, and few of the examples can be considered altogether successful. Such pictures as *Mischief*, for instance, remind us painfully with how much lighter a hand such a painter as Etty would have touched the subject, and how little Mr. Watts has been able to express any intelligible conception of the scene. The *Arcadia*, too, to which we referred above, is a total failure in feeling, and represents simply a half-nude model in a rather unfortunate attitude. So, again, with such compositions as *Fata Morgana*, *The Infant Hercules tended by Nymphs* (unfinished), and, worst of all, *Ariadne deserted by Theseus*, we find no interest and little beauty. They are awkward attempts to excel in a line

¹ On going again to the Grosvenor Gallery, I found that I was mistaken in the place of this picture. It hung in the East room, close to the large work of *Aristides and the Shepherd*.

which is not sympathetic to the painter—trials of a skilful violin-player to perform on the banjo and the bones. The two largest works of the second class—that, namely, which deals with subjects of deep imaginative interest, and treats them seriously—may be dismissed very briefly. The composition of two heroic-size figures, entitled *Time and Oblivion*, is a magnificent piece in line, but conceived on too gigantic a scale to be worked out perfectly, without many years of labour, and it may be doubted whether it would ever make a wholly satisfactory picture; the one entitled *Satan*, a nude, half-length figure, also of gigantic size, with a head turned away from the spectator, is open to the same remark, with the added objection, that a picture in which there is only half a figure, and that half only shows the back of his head, is hardly likely to be specially interesting or intelligible, and that such a subject of such a size should certainly be both, to justify existence at all. Of the large work of *Love and Death* no such criticism can be made; its facts are stated with wonderful clearness and power; the picture is adequately finished; and presents a novel and striking treatment of a great subject, and is very beautiful in composition and colour.

On the whole, this composition may rank as the finest of our artist's imaginative allegories.

The conception of *Love*, standing upon the threshold of the House of Life, striving ineffectually to bar the advance of Death, is very beautiful, and both in drawing and colour, and the movement of his figure resisting to the last the power which he feels must prevail, is expressed with extraordinary ability. The problem of combining the most violent exertion, with grace of attitude, has been solved by Mr. Watts in this picture with complete success, and so has the difficulty of expressing, in the two typical figures, the double action of feeble violence, and quiet but resistless strength. All the minor details, from the brushed feathers of Love's once bright wings, to the falling petals of the roses that surround the porch, are finished with the most delicate beauty, and the whole work is instinct with the best form of pre-Raphaelitism.

There is another large composition, of somewhat similar treatment, entitled *Time, Death, and Fate*, which may perhaps rank with this; but as this is at present, I believe, undergoing considerable alterations at Mr. Watts' hand, and, as I have not seen it for some years, I cannot speak of it with any detail. A small first sketch for this work may be seen in the West Gallery here, but is of inferior merit to the finished picture. The largest work in this exhibition is one which reaches from floor to ceiling of the largest gallery, and is entitled *The Angel of Death*.

This composition is in an excessively unfinished state, and I do not, therefore, purpose to criticise it minutely. The picture is a symbolical one of many figures, representing various types of men and women who have come to Death to pray for release, or to sacrifice their lives for others, and above them all sits the great compassionate Angel, *enthroned upon the ruins of the world*, and holding in her lap the form of a dead child. One of the finest figures is that of a beautiful girl, who is wearily resting her head against the winding-sheet that flows down from Death's robe; and the form of the warrior laying down his sword upon the altar in the centre of the picture, has much simple dignity. Should Mr. Watts be able to finish this work, and make it as beautiful in colour, as it is already grand in conception and form, it will be one of the noblest pictures in modern art. Even now this is a most beautiful and thoughtful illustration of a sombre theme.

The other poetical pictures also deserve careful examination. The *Sir Galahad* is the most perfect, and the *Paolo and Francesca* the most tragic conception of their respective subjects that I remember. I do not feel myself the latter picture has the perfection of love enduring through suffering, that marked the great work on the same subject by Ary Scheffer; but that, despite the imperfections of colour, was dramatically and emotionally perfect, and is hardly capable of being surpassed. The *Sir Galahad* is noticeable for the colour, and the painting of the armour and the woody background. The face, too, of the knight, as he stands bareheaded, gazing before him at the vision none else might see, expresses all the purity and enthusiasm of the spotless knight, and the whole picture is far more cheerful, both in colour and general conception, than is usual in Mr. Watts' best work, and bears a considerable likeness to the manner in which Sir John Millais would probably have executed a similar subject. Less successful in this respect is *Una and the Red Cross Knight*, a composition in low tones of colour, representing the first lines of the *Faërie Queene*, and which appears to have little of the tender gaiety of Spenser's verse. Another illustration to Spenser's epic treats of *Britomart and her Nurse before the Magic Mirror*; and even here, though the artist has expressed himself with singular clearness and power, we feel the want of the atmosphere that envelops the poem. The work is beautiful, but with a certain roughness in its beauty: *in Loves and gentle Jollities arraid*, but with underlying notes of terror and disturbance, and a prevailing motive of unrest. I do not mean so much that, in this respect, it runs contrary to the sense of the original words, but is contrary to the spirit of the whole poem, for, as we all know, the *Faërie Queene* has that peculiar power of describing the most disastrous incidents with a certain grace and courtesy of manner which cover their real significance.



THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER AND THE MURDERERS

SIR JOHN GILBERT, R. A.

(From the original Water colour)

I cannot attempt to notice in detail any more of the poetical works in this gallery, as a few words must be said upon the collection of portraits here exhibited. The collection is a very notable one.

During the last half-century, there has hardly been a very great man in any calling who has not furnished Mr. Watts with a subject: from Jerome Buonaparte to Mrs. Langtry we have them all; and the only difficulty is to know which to select for notice; for there is always, in the criticism of portraits, this difficulty, that the faces of those we love, admire, or respect, seem to us better pictures (unless they are distinctly failures) than those which represent an unknown entity. I think best, therefore, since I can but mention a few specimens of this branch of Mr. Watts' art, to confine my remarks to the portraits of those men and women of whom I have personal knowledge, and of whose likenesses I can therefore speak with some degree of certainty. These, fortunately, comprise some of the best examples of the artist's portrait-painting, amongst them being Mr. Browning, Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr. Morris, Mr. W. S. Lecky, Mr. Burne-Jones, Mr. Leslie Stephen, and Herr Joachim.

Of these the last is, in all essential respects, the finest picture, though only ranked by the painter as a lamplight study. The celebrated musician is represented in the act of drawing the bow across his violin, his head a little bent down towards the instrument. Perhaps, as a likeness, a little flattering, but only in the sense of taking the performer at his very best moment, and, if flattery there be, it is more in expression than feature. The wonderful part of this picture gives us the key to Mr. Watts' great renown as a portrait painter—his capacity, namely, for seizing upon the main points of his sitter's character, and impressing them upon his picture. Without exaggeration of language, this portrait may be said to express music, as truly as it expresses Herr Joachim. Technically, the picture is very simply and quietly painted; there is no Rembrandtesque effect of light and shade, no vivid flesh tints, no elaboration of detail, but, out of a softly dark background, the face, hand, and violin of the musician show with clear yet subdued distinctness. The portrait of Mr. Leslie Stephen is in some respects even more wonderful, since it was, Mr. Watts informs me, executed at a single sitting. The execution is comparatively slight, but rather brilliant in its flesh tints, and the painting of the hair and beard is especially noticeable for quiet but effective suggestiveness. The face is very peculiar—critical yet deprecating, sarcastic and mournful, fastidious, thoughtful, and Bohemian: not one who ranks either himself or others very high, or expects much from a life that appears to him full of errors of taste, weaknesses of intellect, and futilities of

aim. All, at least, of this may be traced in this portrait, which might stand in some way as an antithesis of character to the musician's picture—full of a discordant music.

If these two studies are truly penetrative of character in their various ways, still more so is the likeness of Mr. Burne-Jones. In this Mr. Watts has apparently had no overmastering sentiment to express, nor has he altogether taken the face as a type of character; but has confined his efforts to rendering some of the most prominent characteristics of his sitter. The face, though unmistakably like, has grown more refined in colouring and form beneath his hands, and shows less weakness than in life. But out of the misty blue eyes there looks that curious expression of inner sight that is never seen except in those who dwell in an ideal world. Mr. Burne-Jones looks here as Kilmeny looked when she came back at sunset to her old cottage home, and

“As still was her look, and as still was her e'e,
As the stillness that lay on the emerant lea,
Or the mist that sleeps on a waveless sea.
For Kilmeny had been she knew not where,
And Kilmeny had seen what she could not declare.”

Much as Blake drew *the man who built the Pyramids*, Mr. Watts has here painted the man who drew the *Laus Veneris* and the *Chant d'Amour*—those strange pictures whose glorious colouring is suffused with a tragic splendour, and meanings that we scarcely care to trace—

“Dreamer of dreams born out of his due time.”

The painter stands before us who can find nothing in modern life that is beautiful, or in modern thought that is worthy, and who expresses his sense of the discord between the beauty he craves, and the ugliness he sees, in terms of sympathy with a mediæval world, with which he would have been far more out of harmony, had he lived therein, than in this nineteenth century. Look, again, for an instance of penetration into an alien character, at the portrait of Sir Frederick Leighton, P.R.A., in his robes of D.C.L. A fine face, a figure in an easy attitude and a gorgeous dress, and behind, in the distance, an artist's palette and the legs of a bronze statue. An accomplished man, and a highly-trained painter—a most fitting President of the Royal Academy. It is noticeable that, almost alone of Mr. Watts' later and finer portraits, has he given in this one prominence to the dress, figure, and surroundings of the sitter. Surely, this is an instance of unconscious sympathy, for is it not true that in some measure the dress of circumstance, success, and accomplishment have overlaid Frederick Leighton's power as an artist?¹ He *paints* more beautifully than ever; but if any

¹ The mordant sarcasm of Mr. Whistler comes to mind in this connection—“*paints* too”! was his addition to the list of the President's social and intellectual graces.

genuine lover of art was asked whether he would have the *Cimabue Procession*, or his last year's Academy picture, would there be the slightest hesitation in answering in favour of his earliest work?¹ When John Ruskin saw this picture in the Academy, in 1855, he wrote a good deal about it, and wound up with the following words:—

“It seems to me probable that Mr. Leighton has greatness in him, but there is no absolute proof of it in this picture; and if he does not in succeeding years paint far better, he will soon lose his power of painting so well.”

I must not enter into more details of these portraits, nor can I spare space to allude, except in general terms, to the female likenesses. These latter are marked by an inequality that does not extend to the male pictures, and, in several cases, the painter's deficiency of sympathy with the purely frivolous views of modern-society life has led him into producing work which is almost commonplace.

It seems strange that the prettiness of a thoughtless girl should not be understood by a painter who can fathom so many secrets of character, but there is no doubt of the fact. The only cases in which Mr. Watts' portraits of ladies have been quite successful, have been where he has found some sympathetic quality of thought and expression other than that of simple beauty. Thus his pictures of Lady Lindsay (of Balcarres), Miss Violet Lindsay, and Mrs. Langtry, can only be considered failures. While the portraits of Miss Villiers (Countess of Lytton), Miss Dorothy Tennant, and Mrs. Percy Wyndham, are all excessively fine. The last-mentioned is, indeed, the finest woman's portrait that has been painted of late years. It has all the magnificence of action and surrounding of Carolus Duran's work, with a power of colour and a simple dignity to which the French artist could never attain.

I must not stay to say more upon the qualities of the landscapes in this exhibition. They are almost invariably in low tones of colour, and frequently in half light. Their chief motive is the sadness which resembles sorrow, only

“As the mist resembles rain”;

but occasionally there comes a bit of pure light colouring, like the view of the Carrara Hills, which shows how keen is the artist's appreciation of mountain form, and of the shifting lights and shadows thereon. To the study of landscape, in fact, Mr. Watts brings all the sympathies and methods of his figure-painting, and he continues, too, to endow it with the same characteristic dignity.

¹ The Procession in honour of Cimabue's Madonna was the first picture exhibited by Sir Frederick at the Royal Academy.

I cannot sum up this excessively fragmentary and incomplete sketch of a modern painter's work and meaning, better than by saying in what relation he appears to me to stand to the great artists of the past, whose works he has taken as his chief inspiration. It is, of course—as he would be the first to acknowledge—a relationship of imperfection: judged by *that* standard, who would not fail? But perhaps Mr. Watts' failures are the more apparent to us all, because they are made on the same lines as the ancient successes. It is practically impossible to compare most modern English artists with those great masters of mediæval Italy, who give the inspiration to Mr. Watts' painting. Work which has attempted no more than the representation of passing fashions and costumes, or the literal reproduction of a modern garden or old-fashioned village, escapes by very poverty of aim all great failure, and is comparatively secure of favour in the appeal to everyday scenes and actions. But the man who tries to endue modern thoughts and sympathies with the gorgeousness of Venetian colouring and the subtlety of Florentine draughtsmanship,—who bases his appeal to us, not upon what is most near to our lives, and most common to our sympathies, but on thoughts of which we seldom speak, and graces of action that we have never seen,—this painter attempts a task which all of us will be only too ready to depreciate, if only because such depreciation will excuse us from making the effort to comprehend his meaning. And, of course, he must, in a measure, fail. Mr. Watts' comparative failure, however, was rendered more certain by his devotion to sculpture. Life is not long enough to struggle with the two arts, save for, perhaps, one man in a thousand years, and our painter has, we believe, always suffered from great drawbacks of health. Much of the sadness that surrounds his best work must come, we think, from this sense of imperfect achievement; he has put before him two ideals, and has attained neither—he is, if truth must be told, only a broken statue on the great road of art.

And yet even his failures are most beautiful, for they are sincere work in a great cause, and over the weakest of them there lingers something of the glory and the dream. In his own straightforward words, he has “a right to feel that my aim has not been without elevation; the greater right to find consolation in so feeling, because such effort has certainly not met with general sympathy.”¹

In conclusion, I may say of the various divisions of his work as follows:—The religious pictures are notable for their undogmatical attempt to connect modern thought on that subject with artistic expression; they are probably the simplest form of Christianity ever presented. The Greek myths that he has treated, if they do not

¹ Extract from a letter to the writer.

"smell of Anacreon," are, as Mrs. Browning said of an early Christian poet, great in a nobler sense: "the human soul, burning in the censer, effaces from our spiritual perceptions the attar of a thousand rose-trees whose roots are in Teos." The portraits are unique in modern art for their reticence, no less than their power. The artist will have his sitter's best part, and will insist upon that. The lines of meanness, covetousness, weakness, and sensuality, have no attraction for him, and he does not dwell upon them in detail. His portraits are, therefore, imperfect, photographically speaking; they are, nevertheless, as studies of character, finer than anything we can find since the time of Titian, and they bear to the works of our English Reynolds the relationship that Tintoretto does to Titian. Less wonderfully painted, less glowing in their colour, less perfect in their drawing; but informed with far greater power of penetrating to the essence of the subject, and never surrendering dignity to attractiveness of colour or composition.

Mr. Watts' place in art must be determined by the relative value we place upon great imagination and intellectual power, and the perfection of technical skill. If he is to be judged by the latter alone his rank must fall beneath that of Tadema and Leighton; both of these men are better *painters*. But if we consider that the actual laying on of the paint is a matter of little importance compared with the qualities of colour displayed in the work, the power of the drawing and composition, and the meaning of the whole, then we can, in strict justice, say that Mr. Watts, despite his imperfections, is the greatest of our painters.¹ No other artist has given us so many beautiful illustrations of poetry and religion; no other has touched the old Greek myths, and the poems of Italy and England, with so much human sympathy; no other has left such a living record of our greatest men. After receiving such gifts at his hands, surely we can find a little sympathy for his failures to achieve still greater triumphs, and a little gratitude for a long life spent in such single-minded and earnest devotion to the service of truth and art.

¹ It must be remembered that this essay was written in 1882, when the majority of critics (press critics, I mean) were still in the habit of sneering at Mr. Watts' painting, and especially of deriding his imaginative work. To-day my defence of that phase of his art may appear unnecessarily timid and hesitating, but in the year in which it was written I was alone in the height of my estimate, and I was *very* proud to receive then a letter from this great artist which told me I alone had understood his aim and appreciated his genius.

THE AMATEUR.



HERE is a class of individuals which grows larger every day, and for which few people have a good word, though it forms the topmost twig of our tree of civilisation, the very apex and crown of modern life. The amateur—for it is of him and his class I speak—is a great fact ; his work, or perhaps we should rather say his idleness, is to be seen on every hand. As a modern writer said, who conceals much kindly wisdom beneath the interest of his stories, “Gentlefolks in general have a very awkward rock ahead in life—the rock ahead of their own idleness. Their lives being for the most part passed in looking about them for something to do, it is curious to see—especially when their tastes are of what is called the intellectual sort—how often they drift blindfold into some nasty pursuit.”

It is not, however, the “nasty pursuits” which I am about to discuss here ; for the person in question is the amateur of painting, whose aims and practice might, I think, be made of real service to art, if only they could be a little methodised, a little restricted. At the present time such method and restriction of aim seems, it is true, very far away ; for the line grows daily more difficult to define which separates amateur and professional work, and, from the Grosvenor Gallery downwards, there are few picture exhibitions in which the two may not be seen side by side. Indeed, when we try to think the matter out, there is considerable difficulty in framing a satisfactory definition of professional and amateur. Clearly the etymological meaning of the words will not help us. For most professionals regard art with greater fondness than those who follow it for pleasure alone ; and the professions of the amateur are at least as frequent and insistent as those of his trade-following brother. Nor does it take us much farther to define the rivals as those who work for gain and those whose only aim is amusement ; for this



LANCASTER. Peter de Wint.

From the original Drawing in the collection of the late William Quilter.

definition is unjust to both in almost equal degree : besides which there is no reason, in the nature of things, why the working for gain should necessarily produce the better result. I am inclined to think that the difference really lies rather in degree than quality, and that the true amateur is a younger brother of the professional rather than a poor relation. There seems to be no reason why the one should not be trained as thoroughly as the other up to a certain point : the point of course being fixed with regard to the time and capacity of each amateur student, whereas for the professional it must remain invariably the same. In other words, it should be possible to teach to any one sufficiently interested, certain elementary truths of artistic sight-perception and technique of the same kind as those on which the fuller accomplishment of the artist requires to be founded. For the beginning of all right-doing in art is the education of the eye rather than the training of the hand, and to teach the latter without or before the former must necessarily result in utter failure. And the reason why most amateur works of art are so nugatory, and even so offensive, is less the imperfection with which they have been executed, than the lack of perception and motive which have inspired their execution. The amateur fails in nine cases out of ten, not because he cannot do what he sees, but because he cannot see what to do : because he has no preference for one thing over another, because he has never thought what are the essentials of any given scene or subject, because he has never even opened his eyes and looked at the objects before him with the intent endeavour to see them as they actually appear to his eye, independent of the shape and colour which he knows, or thinks that he knows, they really possess. Now such deficiencies and hindrances as these might be as easily removed from the path and the productions of the amateur as from those of the professional, if only he were given a little commonsense instruction.

I only profess in the following paper to mention a few of the elementary matters which may help any one beginning to draw or paint from Nature, and which would, if attended to, simplify the pupil's work more than the kind of instruction so commonly given by drawing-masters, and found in books on the art of landscape-painting in water-colours, etc., which prescribes the method of laying on washes, the right colours to be used for distance and foreground, the right manner of expressing by different touches, clouds and trees, rocks and water ; the conventional choice and arrangement of a subject, and all the other recipes by which machine-made teachers have endeavoured during the last fifty years to block the pathway of the amateur, and shut his eyes to all truth and beauty. I will have nothing to do with such Abracadabra as these, or with those who imagine that in such a way good work can be produced.

Nor do I care very much for the approbation or encouragement of that other class of amateurs who exaggerate humility to the point of mania, and produce elaborate drawings of eggs and jam-pots, and little bits of rock and shell and weed, with the excuse that such subjects are the only fitting ones for unprofessional students. This last method tends to an abominable self-sufficiency which is even more detestable than sketches made upon the drawing-master's pattern. I have known the conventionally-taught student subsequently discard the corks and bladders, and general life-saving apparatus kindly provided for him in early years; but I have never met one who had become thoroughly indoctrinated with the microscopic study of detail, attain the power of seeing or enjoying Nature, or of depicting any natural scene.

Let us now ask what it is that the instructor should first teach his pupils—the very first thing he should say to them when, having attained some small power of using the pencil, they sally out with the object of making a sketch from Nature. Well, on my theory, his first words should be somewhat to this effect: "You are now entering upon a new life, in a country of which you know nothing, and of which you should have no preconceived ideas. You are to put down upon this piece of paper or canvas, in this first instance, nothing which is the result of your previous knowledge, thought or information: but simply and only what you see before you. Skies are not blue nor grass green, nor trees made up of boughs and leaves, nor water liquid, nor earth solid; nor anything on the earth of any shape or colour whatever, except in so far as these things may appear to you at this present moment. Open your eyes, and put down nothing more than they record. Everything which you will see will appear in three chief aspects; it will have some sort of shape, some sort of strength of light or shadow, and some sort of colour. Fill your paper or your canvas now from one end to the other with masses regarded from this threefold point of view. Never mind what the masses represent; and leave out of account all minute details of their form and surface: but let every one of them be as near as you can make it to the original in colour, light, and general shape. Make as it were a mosaic picture in which these masses shall lie side by side."

Now this is not only the first instruction which should be given to any one attempting to paint from Nature, but it is also almost the last. It includes the whole art of seeing rightly, and when the student has attained the power of following this instruction, he needs no other teacher than Nature herself. This is the one thing needful: *to forget all else but the report of the eye, and to set down the result of that report with entire fidelity.* All work which is not

done on this principle is contrary to Nature, and therefore essentially deficient. It may be very beautiful as a reproduction, in the same way that the miniatures of an ancient missal, or the medallions on Bohemian glass are beautiful, but it is work which starts from a calculated imperfection, and the end attained is an entirely different one. For Nature does not work with sharp boundaries, and does insist upon *value*, as well as colour. Directly we omit from any representation any one of the three elements which are universally present in every object upon which our eyes have ever looked, our work becomes proportionately imperfect and untrue.

After this general instruction nothing remains to tell the pupil but matters of detail, which sooner or later he would find out for himself, equally well. Nevertheless a little time may be saved by his following some plain precepts such as those stated below. In this connection I would entirely disclaim any responsibility for the errors and difficulties into which these precepts may lead any student. They are such as I believe to be true, and hope may be helpful: but the idiosyncrasy of one art-student is so different from that of another, and it is so necessary that each, if he is to do any good, should find salvation after his own fashion, that all instruction in details is almost as likely to be injurious as beneficial. And wherever a student finds, after due trial, that the advice of his instructor conflicts with his artistic predilections, he will probably be more right in listening to the voice within him, than in obeying the voice without. Moreover, the beginnings of all true artistic work are so unattractive that the verdict of friends and even teachers must be received with the greatest caution. The capacity of any human being for art, so far as it can be gauged at all at the outset, is to be gauged by intensity of desire, rather than facility of hand. The drawings of men who have afterwards become great artists have more frequently been remarkable for roughness than for beauty, and there is no worse sign in a student's painting than the sign of prettiness.

Every one who cares for pictures, or for natural beauty, in the sense of wishing to reproduce it, may, if he chooses to give the time, and go to work in the right way, attain to a reproduction of Nature which shall be a real delight to himself, and even in some measure a pleasure to his friends. But this is not to be done by paying for any number of lessons, be the master ever so skilful; but only by continual study of natural fact and natural laws, by gradually educating, not only the hand, but the brain, the eye, and the heart, and bringing all of these to bear upon your work. It is in this latter respect, as a rule, that the amateur fails so dismally and so inexcusably: he fails not so much for want of skill as for want of effort. The labour required for seeing correctly, is as definite and real, as

that for drawing what you do see, and is *never given by those whose theory of life is to pay other folks to see for them*. Art is the result, in the first place of *seeing* rightly, and in the second of *feeling* rightly about what is seen. Amateur art is good, when it partakes of the qualities which are admirable in professional art; and is bad if those merits are entirely absent. Therefore there is no reason why the amateur should not see and feel as artistically as the professional, if he will seek for the right way of doing so. But the *expression* of his thought and feeling must invariably be inadequate. Indeed, in some ways the unprofessional student has even an advantage, for his work is rarely thwarted by pecuniary obstacles, and should not be modified by considerations of what is popular and likely to sell. There is no excuse for his being dull or mechanical in his painting, since the whole world is before him where to choose—since *he* need never choose a subject for which he does not care for reasons of popularity or bread.

Yes, after having been for some years a critic of a large and more than averagely skilful amateur drawing club (some of the members used to exhibit), and having had a far larger experience of professional work, I am convinced that, incredible as it may sound, the amateur does really care less for his subject than the average artist. It is not the ignorance or the incapacity of the lady or gentleman student which tries the instructor, but it is their extraordinary wilful obstinacy, the way in which he or she comes dawdling down to the river, the moor, the mountain, or the forest, with a heart empty, and a head full of other things, and languidly takes out a brush and sucks it, while gazing vacantly at the scene selected. Strange as it may seem, it has rarely been my experience (on an average not more than once in fifty times) to find an *unprofessional* drawing from Nature, in which the faults were not caused *chiefly* by the laziness or the carelessness of the student, rather than by his incapacity. Speaking crudely, one may say of those who make sketches, that it is only artists who try to do them as well as they can. The amateur, as a rule, with a tenth of the professional's capacity, and a hundredth of his precedent education, devotes a languid attention for a minute's time, and is then surprised at the pooriness of the result. The truth is, that as a rule with these half-and-half people, effort ceases, when difficulty begins. As long as their blotted colour looks pretty upon the paper or the canvas; as long as no part of their subject forces their own incompetence upon their attention; so long, in fact, as they can either evade, or shut their eyes to all the real obstacles in their picture, they will go on swimmingly enough. But let the sun shine a little too warmly, or the wind blow a little too rough; let the ground be damp beneath their feet, or the flies buzzing about their head, or a little dust or sand spot their paper, and mix up with their colours;

let them come to a mass of clouds which wants careful drawing, or some boughs which are waving in the wind, or some foreground grass whose spears and blossoms cannot be indicated with a hasty smudge—and behold, up shuts the colour-box, and down comes the white umbrella, and home speeds the faint-hearted practitioner with a sketch which he “had no time to finish.” How sick every artist gets of that phrase; worse almost than the corresponding one, “It only took me half an hour, you know.”

Yet in art, as in other and greater matters, only failure teaches us. No one who can go on quite bravely and sincerely making mess after mess from Nature, but comes to the time, when, he does not quite know how, he makes messes no longer. Somehow from the failure, grows up the fruit. I remember Burne-Jones saying to me, some years ago, on this subject, *à propos* of the designing and arranging of drapery, that he had tried to do it vainly for nearly two years, day after day, till “one morning the sun shone, the earth cracked, the flowers bloomed, and he could design drapery for ever.” This is very much the experience of all genuine art-workers. “I can’t do figures,” used to say the irrational members of my drawing club, “and so I won’t try”; as if “doing figures” was a God-sent gift, that came down from heaven in a basket. This shivering on the brink of any little deeper than ordinary water prevents progress. Bad swimmers in their depth can always manage to keep up an appearance (they leave one toe on the ground), but such never learn to swim. Let them flounder about a little and get the deep water, down their throat and up their nostrils, and after a certain time of spluttering and gasping, and striking out wildly with both arms, they will probably learn to take care of themselves. The right frame of mind for any ordinary student when he sits down to reproduce a bit of Nature, is one not far removed from terror—not very different from what our imperfect swimmer might feel if suddenly flung into deep water. Let him nevertheless take heart; he is travelling the road that every artist in the world has travelled before him, for there is this grand compensating law, that the greater the native genius, the farther removed is the goal of attainment. The best painter is, as a rule, more dissatisfied with his work than the worst. *Painting was never easy yet, except to those who were incapable.*¹

With this brief enunciation of some of the preliminary considerations with respect to amateur and professional work, I proceed to give an account of some of the chief difficulties usually experienced, some idea of the capabilities and limitations of non-professional work, and a very few remarks upon the broad questions of colour, form,

¹ Pardon me, dear friends of the “*Beaux Arts*” who have learned the whole art of “la peinture” during your brief studenthood!

and composition. Before beginning, I must ask to be forgiven for the necessarily disjointed appearance of the following sentences. It is necessary, because in them I endeavour to condense in as terse a form as possible, hints which, if fully expressed in due sequence and connection, would cover ten times the space at my disposal. The quasi-epigrammatic form of the paragraphs may perhaps be pardoned, on the ground that I was either compelled to adopt it or omit half my subject-matter. Still I must say again clearly that the following hints are really worth nothing in themselves: constitute no Abacadabra or Fi-fo-fum for the production of sketches. All that they aim at is to put before students some plain facts in connection with this subject, which they will have to consider and put in their right connection.

Since the first obstacle that one who desires to study any form of drawing or painting has to contend with is undoubtedly his relations, let us say a few words upon their probable conduct. If they are of the rare but pleasant kind who encourage the young beginner none the less because he is one of their own kin, they may be left, with a blessing on their heads, so long as they do not complicate their kindness with advice. But should they do this, the student must, if he is desirous of not wasting his time, refuse from the first to listen to their precepts. Not *because* they are relations or friends, but because it is necessary for every one who is setting to work in art to be a law to himself, or at all events to have but one legitimate and adequate master. If you follow the ideas in art of your maiden aunt, or your bachelor uncle, either from love of their personality or respect for their intelligence, you are wasting time entirely, and preparing for yourself difficulties in the future, similar to those which you might feel in making a freehand drawing after you had been accustomed to use tracing paper. For the first beginning of art, whether for amateur or professional, is freedom. You must run alone, even if you stagger and fall in the attempt, from your first moment. But having got rid of your relatives' advice, let us go a step farther and get rid of their approbation. Perhaps this is even more fatal than their blame. For in the first place they seldom care, save for you personally, and in the second place they seldom know. And in the third place, if they both know and care, they will probably be silent. For in this last resort, they will be certain that the less that is said about a student's work the better. "*Continuez, jeune homme,*" is what Carolus Duran says to his pupils when they have done an exceptionally good piece of work: permission to labour is the only reward which a student should receive.

Does this seem hard? Do you require encouragement? *Do you want to show results?* That is a fatal error—an error common, alas! to almost every amateur. The whole world of Nature is just begin-



THERE'S NONE SO DEAF AS THOSE THAT WON'T HEAR
E. BLAIR LEIGHTON

ning to talk to you ; it is the greatest boon, rightly understood, for your little personal world to be silent while you learn the new language. And never mind, though it be Christmas-time or New Year's Day, or the anniversary of some one's marriage ; don't give away any of your pictures at present. Give anything else, but don't part with incomplete bits of yourself till they are worth having ; it's best to keep what you produce in the workshop. Resist the temptation also to look too much on what you have done. Do it with heart and brain to the utmost of your power—there's something wrong if you don't feel washed-out after each drawing ; but don't look at it all day and night, and the next day, take down the shutters afresh, put a new bit of goods in the window, and forget all about yesterday's sample. Drawings look much better in gilt mounts, or framed neatly, but the drawings themselves are no better—leave them as they are, for the present at all events. I would not have you refuse to show your work to any one who wishes to see it—that's making a mystery of the matter which the thing is not worth. But I would have you be sure first, that they *do* wish to see it, and then I would have you show it, taking as little as possible of the praise or blame bestowed, and desiring neither. If your heart is in your work, you will soon come into this frame of mind. Most random praise is an impertinence, though that hardly prevents our finding it sweet. Think of how foolish it would seem if, when you were learning a foreign language, some one who perhaps knew a few words of it, and possibly none at all, were to ask you to pronounce the syllables you were acquainted with, and compliment you on your acquirement. You are learning now the universal language of Art, which great men in all times have spent their lives in acquiring—do you want to hear the irresponsible compliments of any one, while you are mastering its alphabet, or even in the midst of its declensions ?

A little practical detail you will find of great help from those in authority. Get them to allow some place where you can work by yourself, where you can keep all the odds and ends of your artistic life, free from disturbance or observation. A garret does perfectly well if you are in town ; an outhouse or a shed if you are in the country. And it probably won't hurt, if you are young, even if it is bare and draughty ; or faces east, west, north, or south ; or is cold in winter and hot in summer. For one of the first lessons of art is *endurance*, and is rarely to be learnt on velvet cushions ; and a habit of conquering small obstacles of surroundings, will be found invaluable when the time comes for conquering great obstacles in the art itself.

Now as to the preliminary setting out—a word about paraphernalia. The traditional burnt stick and whitewashed wall, which is all that some of the great artists have had to begin with, is, though

somewhat exaggerated, nevertheless a type of the right way for the beginner to set to work. The simpler your means the better; and even if the simplicity involves much limitation, it will be no drawback for some time to come. Many of the finest drawings in the world have been done with a simple pen and a wash of ink; and even if you haven't a paint-brush, with a pen, a penknife, and the end of your forefinger, you can get nearly any effect in light and shade that you are likely to want. I confess as a boy, I found the pleasure of rubbing ink into an outline with the finger, very great, and the triumph when you have attained with these blundering means anything near your intention, is delicious in proportion to its difficulty. And this, and corresponding limitations of material, not only harden your spirit, and make you fruitful of resource, but take away one considerable difficulty which beginners are wont to experience. They prevent us losing the way in the choice of implements and colours. If there's only a big brush to do the fine and broad strokes with, one can hardly help learning to use it both broadly and delicately; if we have only one colour in our paint-box, we soon learn how varied is the range of effects which we may gain therefrom, and how to use it to the greatest advantage. Is not all this very elementary? and yet how few masters there are who seek to enforce economy of this kind. Now we will suppose that you are adopting water-colour, the medium that most amateurs begin with, as your first method, and say a word about paper. Shiny writing-paper is bad, because the colour will not lie upon it evenly without the use of white, and blotting-paper is bad for obvious reasons: and with these exceptions it scarcely matters what paper you select. But there is then to be remembered that very rough paper, while it increases the effect of your colour, puts considerable obstacles in the way of accurate drawing. It is, so to speak, a rough road full of stones over which it is difficult to walk circumspectly. As a rule, drawing-masters recommend it, because the surface tends to conceal their pupils' defective use of the pencil; because the same amount of finish in painting is not required; because the surface is less easily disturbed by bad brushwork, and many similar reasons. All of these should, I think, weigh in the opposite scale; and though the reverse of rough sketching-paper—what is ordinarily called "hot-pressed"—is apt to make your colouring reveal all its deficiencies, it is of the two more preferable. A coarse, or rather a hard, line upon such a surface, shows all its error, in the same way as a good line shows all its beauty. But the beginner might draw outlines on a rough surface for weeks without finding out how bad was his handling of the pencil. As a matter of fact, few surfaces are more fitting for a student for drawing than ordinary cartridge-paper; it takes the pencil easily, it won't bear too much messing about, it does not require either

the refinement of pencilling upon an excessively smooth surface, or admit of the coarseness which passes muster on rough sketching-paper. But, to sum up this part of the subject, take what material you can get most readily, and afford most easily, and, when you have taken it, *don't stint its use*. Have plenty of material by you, no matter how humble be its kind. Never think when you are using paint, canvas, or paper, of how long your paints will last, or how many sheets of surface you are using. *The worst drawing is worth the canvas or paper it's done on*. Take a new sheet and start fresh when you begin again. And you had better work from the first upon an easel, no matter of how rough a kind, if only because so doing helps you to acquire steadiness of hand, from the impossibility of resting your hand upon the paper or canvas. Besides, with an easel you can, either standing or sitting, more easily see the effect of what you are doing; you do not have the continual looking up and down from your work to your desk, and *vice versa*.

Remember that what you are seeking, in the first instance, is simply to express your subject; that every touch which does not aid, necessarily obscures expression. An irrelevant touch in a drawing, or one which is put without special intention, is like a superfluous or half-understood word in a sentence. And if there be many such, the whole work becomes unmeaning. Besides which, the materials of painting are always delicate, and will not bear rough treatment; they are like irritable people, and must not be teased or worried. If paint is stirred about on the palette, the paper, or the canvas, all the freshness of colour is soon lost, the tint approaches nearer and nearer to mud. Note also, that the surface on which you work is in one sense a colour, and almost the most precious of your colours. This will work for you, or against you, according as you manage; if you destroy the purity, you can hardly preserve the brilliancy of your painting. The most salient point, probably, of old English water-colour painting was the use which the artists made of this paper ground for obtaining brilliancy and transparency in their work. The whiteness of paper is felt throughout their pictures; pictures in which the truth of atmospheric effect has never yet been rivalled in the history of art.

Clearly understand what this implies, before proceeding farther with our subject. Every art, and every branch of art, has special qualities, which should be preserved at any cost. These qualities, of course, are held in subordination to the principles which govern art as a whole, and consist chiefly in making the most of the special material and the special opportunities which that material affords. In this way methods, which would be intolerable in some branches of art, are not only tolerable but right in others; and the best way of working

in any given medium, is the way which preserves most carefully, and exemplifies most clearly, that medium's essential qualities. The best stained glass is not that which seeks to possess all the gradations of colour and subtleties of form and chiaroscuro which we find in painting. The best woodwork is not that which is carved in imitation of lace or drapery. The best mosaic is not that which we need a magnifying-glass to tell from brushwork. The best etching does not seek to give the calculated completeness of engraving; and so on throughout the list.

Now, if we seek the essential difference between water-colour and oil-painting, we find that it consists in the foundation of transparency; that all the methods of the former are based upon the manner in which one colour is seen through another. No doubt there are opaque colours in water-colour, and transparent ones in oil; but, broadly speaking, the reverse is the case. Nor does this express the whole of the difference, for in pure water-colour painting not only are our colours transparent, but the foundation upon which we lay them is a foundation of light, rather than a foundation of darkness. It is the fact of the transparency of the paint allowing this light ground to shine through the colour, which gives the inimitable delicacy and sunny aspect to good water-colour work. The light is, so to speak, made for us before we begin throughout the picture just as the light is made in the sky itself, and shines through any number of encumbering clouds. The system of purity, therefore, in water-colour is, we may broadly say, the system of Nature; whereas the practice in oils is the reverse. To use the old studio formula, in the first we "load our shadows and scumble our lights"; in the second we "load our lights and scumble our shadows."

Now, there are several dangers into which the young student is likely to run, which may be mentioned in connection with this definition. The first of these is the danger of not understanding this quality of transparency, and of seeking to gain his effect by the juxtaposition, rather than the combination, of his colours. And the second is, that from his limited experience, even if he keeps the above facts steadily in view, he will lose the purity of his white paper, and so get darkness instead of light behind his transparency. This second result is inevitable at first. Patience, care, and practice alone are the cure. The third danger may be seen exemplified in most young ladies' sketches, and may be called briefly the danger of washiness. For colour put on in thin washes with the object of being partially transparent, must, if the exact medium be not attained, either lose or exaggerate its transparency. And as all objects upon earth are solid, and all objects in the sky are round, this lack of sufficient opacity and rotundity produces a spectral, shadowy

appearance throughout the drawing. The operation, it will be seen, is a nice one. There is a Scylla and a Charybdis on either hand. On this side we have the danger of losing the essential quality of our art—the quality of transmitted light; on the other, the danger of losing all the solidity and reality of natural objects. Speaking roughly, we may say that into one or other of these pitfalls an amateur is bound to tumble. No instruction upon earth can save him, simply because the matter is one of technical skill, only to be gained by experience. It is well, however, that he should understand that there is no possible comparison in oil-painting, with some of the effects which can be produced in water-colour. The infinite delicacy and softness—the gradation, and the atmospheric effects of the best water-colours, are inimitable in any other medium whatsoever.

We come now to the question of whether this method of art is more suitable to the student than that of oil-painting. And here I am sorry to say I find myself opposed to nearly all art-teachers with whose opinions I am acquainted. I admit the superior facility with which in water-colours a slight sketch can be made in a few minutes, and just tinted with the help of a little box which will go in the waistcoat-pocket. I acknowledge that it is at once less cumbrous, less costly, less troublesome, less pretentious, and likely to be more pleasing in its results, than any amateur work in oil. But holding as I do the opinion that all student-work is important, not so much for what is produced, as for the instruction given in seeing Nature and understanding the works of artists—I think that, a student's time being necessarily limited, and as he can hardly expect to master both methods, the best way is to select the one in which the great majority of the world's finest pictures have been executed: the one to which all the merits of water-colour are in comparison, "as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." Nor is this all; for the most elementary qualities of good painting can be emphasized in an oil sketch, in a manner which is impossible in water-colour. It is difficult to explain this shortly, but it results from the fact that it is comparatively easy in oils, from the very nature of the medium, to put on at once a mass of colour, of the requisite strength and form. The colours do not run into one another, but lie side by side, and may be joined or altered in shape without great difficulty. The effect is obtained, so to speak, at once, and a good oil sketch rarely needs strengthening. The medium is more tractable, and will stand comparatively rough handling without losing much brilliancy; and there are many other considerations of like kind. No doubt there is a great deal to be said on both sides of the question: if the student sketches in oil, he should do a considerable amount of minute work in pencil or pen-and-ink, in order to keep delicacy of form and minuteness of detail well before his eyes. If he does this, however,

it is scarcely possible but that he will escape some of the most crying vices of ordinary unprofessional painting. He is little likely to be weakly, washily pretty, the temptations are all the other way. The sham picturesque is the last subject which will come readily to him ; nor will he find his work encumbered with a mass of irrelevant details. The facility with which all sorts of intricate forms can be drawn on paper and tinted with a brush, has no analogue upon canvas for a beginner, who is almost forced thereby to take broad simple subjects. Of course such a student will be to a certain extent like a youngster in a riding-school, riding, without stirrups, on a rough raw-boned charger, and getting a good deal knocked about in the process. There is another thing too—a bad oil sketch is such a gruesome thing, and speaks with such a loud, insistent voice, that praise is impossible, and so the daub is little likely to be stuck in a book, or shown round to admiring friends.

Again, if you want to draw, you must do a lot of work which won't be recognised, except by those who have undergone similar labour, and then you will find out how many things there are which go to make a picture. Up to a certain point, everything you attempt to represent, is paint on paper, or on canvas ; carry it a degree farther, and you have a marble column, a woman's dress, or whatever you want to paint. The labour that changes the one to the other, *never shows*, and is always *there*.

Let us now, before proceeding farther, give a few practical dicta to the student, especially with regard to some technical matters which he probably would not discover for himself for a long time.

Remember that in any natural scene, there is a landscape of the sky, as well as a landscape of the earth, and that, though the latter may be sometimes flat, the former is always round. Round objects in a hollow vault cannot be expressed by thin ungradated washes of colour : therefore clouds must be gradated and their roundness indicated. The same rules which apply to the perspective of terrestrial objects, apply also to that of aerial ones, and if violated, produce the same results. The ordinary amateur invariably forgets this, and becomes Japanese in the upper part of his picture. Local colour is obscured by distance and altered by sunlight, almost as much as it is hidden by shadow. A red coat a mile off is almost grey. Everything has, broadly speaking, a light side and a dark side, and one of the first and most necessary pieces of art education is to learn to see this. In nine amateur drawings out of ten, objects are drawn rather in plan, than as they appear to the eye.

Objects appear round to the eye, because of the gradation of light



ALMOND BLOSSOM.— ALFRED EAST

upon their surface. This rule applies to everything in Nature, and therefore form cannot be indicated without attention to this gradation. This applies equally to the slope of a down and the shape of a teapot. Painting is not tinting a flat surface, but gradating a flat surface so that it appears to project or retreat, or of whatever form may be required.

An egg, a man's head, and a tree, are all, broadly speaking, round objects, though the first is smooth and white, and the two last-mentioned coloured and irregular. There is no more reason why you should neglect to have the spherical form of trees, or of a person's head clearly expressed in your drawing, than that you should omit the roundness of a ball or an egg. Only, as a rule, the amateur fastens on the easily-seen features of nose and eyes, or bough and leaf, and does not notice or think about the delicate gradation which gives the effect of solidity, and which makes, as the French would say, the object in question *turn*.

Any object, or any part of Nature, has a definite shape, if it be only the shape of a mass of colour, light or shade. Every stroke of the drawing which does not set down some definite shape, or some portion of a definite shape, must inevitably be entirely wrong. Nature is not made up of strokes, or blots, or little scrabbles in various directions, like worms wriggling, but of masses. Nor is there a *border* round objects, as a rule. They simply end where others begin, such and such a mass relieved by *value*, as well as colour and form, against such another.

Roughly speaking, if you look at a landscape in the direction of the sun, the colour is more or less invisible. If you turn your back towards the sun, the reverse is the case. If therefore your picture is to depend upon colour, you must look away from the light; and this is in nineteen cases out of twenty the best thing to do.

The trunk of a tree is not stuck in the ground; but holds it as the fingers hold the glass. In fact, the two are parts of the same organism—connections, at all events, by marriage.

Boughs, no matter how wavy and slight, or how gnarled and twisted, are seldom or never disjointed or weak. Each portion of them depends on another, and may be traced in dependence and in general line of spread, to the parent trunk.

Leaves are not independent of branches, yet frequently the amateur draws the outside form and lays the branches of the tree upon it. The shape of a tree, however, is made up of masses of leaf and branch, each having a distinct relation to the other, and each expressive of growth, character, and spherical nature.

A leaf has a definite shape, which is to be drawn if you are near ; a group of leaves has also a definite shape, which is clearly perceptible when the individual leaf is not. When you can see neither the leaf nor the group because of distance, you may still see that the tree forms itself, as a rule, into masses which have relation to growth, which indeed express growth, to any understanding eye ; and these you have to set down. Trees are not made by splodging about with browns and greens and yellows, in little patches without definite intention. Nor will any amount of rubbing and scraping give you the texture of a rock or other object, if you can't make the form clearly perceptible by your gradated light and shade. Elaboration of work, is not finish. Many minutely stippled-up drawings, are, in the true sense of the word, utterly unfinished. For finish is not putting more work into a drawing, but more fact. A complicated means of expressing any natural fact or pictorial incident, is, other things being equal, inferior to a more simple means. Never use two lines where one would represent the object equally well. There is another side, too, to this question, for all added labour upon a drawing or picture tends to obscure the individuality of the artist, and to a certain extent to take away from the impulse of the work. And so, unless there is a definite gain in completeness or beauty produced by the elaboration of the idea, the work loses both on the sides of ease and motive.

Neatness is one of the greatest vices of amateur work. Not that it is in itself either a good or a bad thing ; but that it shows the worker to have been occupied with irrelevant matters. For neatness is essentially one of the leisurely virtues, valuable chiefly in lives and occupations of an unimportant kind. When every faculty of brain and hand is being brought into play upon a work of art, there is no time left to consider dabs of paint upon the coat-sleeve, or whether a few drops of varnish are or are not spilt upon the floor. For the mind refuses to work at the same moment freely and restrictedly, and if you think about the small outside *impedimenta* of your occupation, you take away so much of the power which you require for the occupation itself.

Carelessness on your picture is still less tolerable than neatness, for carelessness in painting is incompatible with any genuine attempt to paint well. A work of art may sometimes be produced swiftly, but never idly or by chance. And though the finest and quickest lines and bits of brushwork are frequently the best, they are never so swift as not to be done with deliberate purpose, and with the utmost strain of the worker's power.

Complacency is generally found with neatness, and generally

arising from having mastered, more or less fully, some inferior system of drawing. For if one believes that a splodge of green for a field, and a splodge of purple for a mountain, and a little blue slopped here and there on a piece of white paper for a sky, and other similar renderings of Nature, are sufficient for the purposes of art; then, *when one has acquired the small amount of skill necessary for putting such splodges in their right place, there is every reason why one should be complacent.* With every added sketch done upon such a system, the mental and physical eye gets duller, and grows to have less power of perceiving the minutiae of form and colour and chiaroscuro. And with every added sketch, the hand grows more capable of its mechanical practice, and produces with greater ease a splodge of the required shape and tint.

When you are not certain of what to do to a drawing, do nothing. Nothing is so fatal a bar to future good work as the habit of splodging about indefinitely. And, on the other hand, the habit of putting down no touch or line without a clear perception of the end which you intend to gain thereby, is the most wholesome habit in the world, and one which must inevitably result in progress. Part of the pleasure which is given by a good sketch is that whoever sees it, perceives the utmost carrying-out of this definite intention, the continual selection between twenty or thirty different matters, and the clear undisguised presentation of the one chosen.

We will now suppose that our student has attained a certain proficiency in the use of the pencil and the brush, and is desirous of beginning to sketch from Nature, and see what are likely to be his chief elementary difficulties. We will suppose that he has done up his colour-box, his umbrella, his camp-stool, his little folding easel, and a couple of canvases, in a neat parcel (a long luggage-strap is the best kind of fastening), and is setting out for his day's work. What is likely to be the course of events? In all probability, unless his subject has been chosen beforehand, he will wander about for two or three hours, till he is so tired, so dusty, and so disheartened, that he is good for nothing, and finally will return home without having unstrapped his luggage. The number of times that that has happened to the present writer is more than he cares to remember. The remedy is twofold. Either you must choose your subject beforehand (which is best), and go straight away and begin thereon, or you must make up your mind to plump down in the first available spot which you come across, and do the best you can. Judging from personal experience, I should say that if you are in at all a pretty part of the country, the latter proceeding will generally find you a sufficiently good subject for student-work. And there is no doubt that the habit of drawing from subjects which are not at first

sight attractive, is the greatest help in after years in educating the eye to see the beauties of ordinary scenes and circumstances. *And remember that ordinary scenes and circumstances are those from which the artist must, as a rule, extract the material for his pictures.* Think of the great painters of English landscape and their finest works, how trivial and commonplace seems their character. Gainsborough's "Crossing the Stream," Constable's "Mill," "Valley Farm," David Cox's "Hayfield," De Wint's "Cornfield," Turner's "Frosty Morning," such are the names of six of the greatest landscapes that English painters have ever produced. Indeed, go a step farther, and look at Old Crome's "Mousehold Heath" in the National Gallery, and notice how a magnificent picture can be made out of a sweep of moorland and a stormy sky.

This difficulty of subject, which is taught in no book, and rarely touched on by any art-instructor, must be faced from the very first. Each of us must learn to discover for himself that which appears to him to be beautiful, and the qualities in a scene which appeal to his imagination, or his feeling. Subject is really the diet of painting, and must be regulated according to the personal wants of the painter. But it is strange to discover how seldom any subject which is inartificial does not afford distinct opportunities for artistic purposes. The student, I think, should not be in a hurry to devote himself to one given class of work ; he will soon learn to know what scenes he cares most for ; and, till then, it is no bad way for him to take without grumbling, as a subject of study, whatever lies in his way. Perhaps a few dogmatic principles may be laid down, though even to these there are a great many exceptions.

All things out of their usual place are generally unfitting for pictures, unless their incongruity is useful for some definite purpose. For instance, cut flowers, plucked fruit, shells, and in general all objects which have an accustomed place in Nature, make bad subjects for pictures when divorced from that position. But it by no means follows that they therefore make bad portions of subjects ; that a plate of fruit may not be most delightful in some genre composition, that flowers will not help the beauty of a woman's dress, or perhaps the significance of her gesture, and so on. What the student has to consider is whether he has sufficient object to gain in depriving flower or shell or fruit of its natural surroundings, and to take care that, if he has not, he paints the object as found in Nature. 'Tis but common sense after all, for to take anything from its *entourage* without a motive, is evidently to lessen the significance, to decrease the beauty. For the least part of the beauty is that of the thing *per se* independent of all relations. Think how little admirable, as a rule, is the ordinary garden shrub in a picture, for a reason which is allied to the

one of which I have been speaking. It is almost invariably an object which has been evidently *placed* in position, it is rarely allowed to grow freely, and surrounded by other shrubs of varying kinds, each of which is as evidently and wilfully jammed into holes in the ground and forms no unit of natural beauty, but rather one of show and artificial life. There is something in these unchanging, irregular walls of evergreen which, when we come to think, seems incongruous with our English gardens. We know that summer will not make them more green, nor winter bare, nor autumn vary the monotony of their colouring; they seem to have no personal life, and to make no demand upon our sympathies. Reasons of this sort will be found to apply to nearly every subject, and to determine suitability, or the reverse. If we push the matter to an extreme, we can see this truth at once. No one would think of painting a boat lying upon a turnpike road, or a plough lying on the beach instead of in the furrow. But few students bestow sufficient thought upon their painting, or rather upon the selection of their subjects, to follow out a principle into its subtler phases.

I repeat, that no matter how limited may be an amateur's powers, he can always select a subject which has some definite meaning, no matter how simple. If the motive is only to tell the colour of the grass on a certain slope of hillside, or the movement of clouds on a given afternoon, or the circling lines of water in the stream, or the straining of a bough in the wind, or the plunge of a ship in the waves, it is still quite sufficient. For—and I think this is a consideration which does not often occur to amateurs—the minds of people who look at and care for pictures soon grow to be eminently sympathetic, if only they have the least chance of feeling sympathy. The eye seeks, unconsciously to itself, for the slightest hint of the painter's intention, and the mind, getting hold of such a trace, follows our meaning eagerly, and sympathises with the failure or glories in the success, with an almost personal emotion. I don't know that there is to be gained from ordinary pictures by inartistic people a greater pleasure than that when the beholder says to himself, "Yes, I see what the artist was trying to do." And the reverse is as certainly the case. The perception of the no-meaning in a picture causes a revulsion against it of great intensity. "What on earth have you dragged my attention into this gilt frame for," we seem to ask of the artist, "if you had nothing to tell me when you got me there?"

But if the student must beware of having no subject, he must be careful also not to render his drawing too complicated, nor to overburden it with attempted subtleties of meaning. His motive should always be a simple one, *simple in proportion to the paucity of his powers*, and, speaking broadly, should refer to some of the ordinary

facts of life or Nature. For there is no such thing as commonplace motives in art, apart from the way in which they are treated. There is nothing commonplace in the ordinary human affections, and the natural objects of the world, unless they are seen through a vulgar mind or eye. "Who ever saw an ugly woman look unattractive when she was kissing her child?" as Wilkie Collins says somewhere. There is too the advantage in the commonplace, of a general appeal to every one. And if your work is *fine* commonplace, you have for your audience not the Upper Ten alone, but those of every estate.

One obstacle which is likely to check the beginner and greatly discourage him, must be noted in this connection. And that is, that if he attempts, as I urge him to attempt, never to execute a drawing without a definite intention to tell some story, no matter how simple or how short, he will suffer at first grievously for his inability. He will find himself incapable of saying the smallest thing clearly; he will, to use common language, feel like a bigger fool every day. I remember speaking to a great artist once about the difficulty of learning to draw animals in motion, and his telling me how he had learnt to do it.

"There is only one way," he said; "you can't attempt to do the whole thing at once, you must do it piecemeal. Say you want to do a dog running, you must watch till you get one going the way you want, and seize what part of his action you see most clearly—say the line of his back, or the angle of his hind-leg, or the pose of his head, or whatever it is. Stick that down in your note-book, and nothing else; and watch him again till you get another morsel of action, and so on day after day till you have got all the facts of the matter. Then you can begin to put your running dog together."

Well, something in this way must a beginner think of doing his subject, and he must be content if he can get only a very little bit of it in this or that rendering; *let him get that little bit as clear as possible*, and not be disheartened at the incompleteness or failure of the whole.

But the greatest drawback to amateur art is, as a rule, that it means nothing. Incomplete, poor, and erroneous as is its technical part, the spiritual part is perhaps even on a lower level. And even if the technical speech is at all attained, how rarely is it used for any intelligible purpose. We are all prone to forget, I think, that there is little object in being able to reproduce upon paper any scene or action whatever, unless something else is gained beyond the mere reproduction. If an image is produced which only repeats a visual impression, and that poorly (as must always be the case), without enforcing either the significance or the beauty of what has been



A PRIMEVAL BATHING PLACE

C. H. SHANNON

nal drawing in the possession of the author

seen, without enforcing a connection with our sympathies, and enabling us to see more in the subject than we should have seen ourselves, we can hardly call the work one of art. The best result that can be obtained by the great majority of amateur students, is not the capacity to do drawings of more or less inferior quality themselves, but to gain sufficient knowledge of the subject-matter, methods, and principles of art, to enjoy the works of great artists, and see their true relation to the world at large. Not only does this produce a pleasure of far wider scope than the gratification of mere personal vanity, but it is one of those productive feelings, which tend by their very existence to increase the amount and the power of good art.

If the enormous body of amateurs in England were to work from this standpoint, their influence not only upon all who knew them, but upon our painters, would be simply incalculable. We should hear no more from the artists those bitter words which are so frequent in the present days concerning amateur work ; nor should we have from the artists a litter of those cheap pictures which rely for their attraction upon flashy renderings of Nature, or cheap tricks of sentiment. I sometimes wonder why no one has noticed that during the last thirty years in England, in which there has been such an enormous spread of art-education, the essential qualities of English art have distinctly declined. Technically, no doubt, at all events in oil-painting, the reverse has been the case ; we have learnt far more of Continental methods, always in advance of our own—a slightly more enlightened system of instruction has been pursued in our art-schools—and we have had opportunities of comparing our artistic products with those of other nations, and noting their greater deficiencies. But the motive of the work has, it appears to me, almost entirely altered. We used to be dull, respectable, and honest ; our sympathies were limited, but still they were true as far as they went, and at all events we were distinctly national. Add to this, that there was still living, or but lately dead, a group of landscape painters who may be said broadly to have been the greatest which the modern world has ever known—Stanfield, Linnell, Muller, Turner, Cox, and De Wint—who combined with their truth to Nature a breadth of idea, a simplicity of intention, and a sturdy contempt for insincerity or affectation, such as could scarcely be surpassed. What has our art-education given us in exchange ? What has become of the simplicity and honesty of English figure-painting ? Which of our modern men will give us a picture like Mulready's "Choosing the Wedding Gown," or the elder Leslie's "Uncle Toby and Widow Wadman"—pictures which are not only works of art, but are fine *national* works of art, which breathe the spirit of the land, and that which made the land great, in every line. What have we substituted for these ? Futile classicalities, which the people neither care for nor understand ; and sham

renderings of a Parisianised society life, such as is alien to the very heart of the English nation.

“One Spaniard lick two Portugee,
One jolly Englishman lick them all three,”

is no doubt a very boastful saying, and one of very questionable taste ; but after all it is the spirit which won Agincourt, and destroyed the Armada, and a more wholesome one than this half-shivering imitation of Parisian *chic*, or this puling longing after the outside form of an ancient life, which has nothing in common with our own, or for the matter of that with the manner in which we represent it.

How does this bear upon the work of the amateur ? In this way, I think, that such a change would have been impossible, had the unprofessional students of painting directed their efforts to the comprehension of more than the superficial aspects of art. We must remember the artist is a younger son after all, he must do something for his living ; and that something must be, in the long-run, *what is demanded from him*. He may keep up a technical standard, but it is not his business to keep up an emotional or intellectual one—for that, he is only “the glass and abstract chronicle of his time.” His pictures tell us only what we are, but not what we could be. Nearly every household in England at the present day has at least one member who in some form or another, in the sweet slang of the period, “goes in” for art. What an effect would be produced upon the nation as a whole, and the professional painters in particular, if all of these amateurs were to understand and endeavour to carry out in their own practice, and seek for in the pictures of artists, a few simple principles of good art, such as those which are indicated above.



Wilkin Lewis
To Harry Quilter
1887

IN MEMORIAM AMICI: WILKIE COLLINS.



THE following study is from the critical point of view open to one very grave objection, since it omits all discussion of the imperfections of Wilkie Collins' work: the cause of this omission should be plainly stated. The first portion of the essay was written some years ago and appeared under the title of "A Living Story-teller" in the *Contemporary Review*, and had for avowed purpose not criticism, but the endeavour to obtain some public recognition of Wilkie Collins' long service to the English public, and his achievements in the art to which he devoted his life. The second portion of my essay was written nearly three years later, on the occasion of the novelist's death, and was necessarily, therefore, wholly uncritical. In the interval between these writings I had come to know the subject of my essays, and had received from him much unostentatious kindness and literary help, for which I had no shadow of a claim. Under these circumstances, and with these remembrances, I feel no disposition to-day to repair the critical deficiency which my essay shows so clearly. Let other hands insert the shadows here, I will deal only with the sunnier aspects of the picture. Indeed in any case, it were the basest of ingratitude for the present writer to enlarge upon the limitations and imperfections of this author, for during my whole life his books have been to me the most enjoyable stories in the world, and what I have learned during these years of sympathy and help for the weak, intolerance of pretence and Philistinism, compassion for the erring, and reverence for the good, has been taught me in no small measure by this sensation novelist. How far others may be able to gain from these books what I have gained of pleasure and profit I do not know, but I feel sure of this, that no books more instinct with wide-reaching sympathy and charity, and with the essential spirit of Christianity as distinguished from its outward forms, have been written in our day, and if they are viewed apart from such considerations simply as stories,

that there is no novelist living who can rival the author of *No Name* and *The Woman in White*.

The endeavour, therefore, of this paper is to show some grounds for this belief, and if it may be to lead a somewhat forgetful public to a fuller appreciation of the writer than has been as yet bestowed.

What then are the qualities of Mr. Wilkie Collins which separate him from the other novelists of his time, and which constitute his special claim upon our admiration? The chief of these can fortunately be stated very shortly and simply : this author has told stories better than they have ever been told in the world before, and probably better than they will ever be told again.

Now, in this art of story-telling, Charles Reade, Dickens, and Wilkie Collins were all past masters, but they were masters with a difference, and, since the art is almost a forgotten one, it is worth while to note in what the difference consisted. In some ways it is true that Dickens told his stories rather badly : he was always wandering away from his point ; he seldom overcame the temptation to put in half-a-dozen new characters, whether they were needed or not ; he exaggerated his types to such an extent that one continually feels personally angry with them and him ; and in all sorts of irrelevant places he sticks in superfluous eccentric people and amusing incidents which it needs our utmost ingenuity and tolerance to weave into the substance of his plot. But in another way he tells his story equally well, giving to it an overpowering sense of vitality and truth, touching it on one side and another till the plot gains something of the multiplicity, and the light and shadow of life itself ; above all, just when the reader's interest is on the verge of escaping him, he compels his attention by sheer force of genius.

Charles Reade's method is more methodical, and far less elaborate : its science consists in a perfectly clearly conceived, dramatic, and continuous narrative, the progress of which is never arrested from commencement to finish, which is subject to no interruption, and burdened with no unnecessary additions. The essential difference between his method and that of the other writers whom I have mentioned, is that it is entirely a personal one ; he has always his characters by the throat, and, so to speak, pinches their windpipes hard, and shouts in their ear, "You say so-and-so", ; he then takes his unfortunate puppet by the throat, and shoves him lustily through whatever part he has to play in the drama. Bristling with facts and arguments, bubbling over with power and wit, indifferent to rebuffs, and impervious to ridicule, this author's personality and his story shoulder their way together through each of his books, till, after reading two or three of them, we almost doubt of whom we know

the most, the man who writes, or the men and women whom he writes about.

And now let us turn to the subject of our article, notice the peculiarities of his method, and see how entirely it differs from that of either Dickens or Reade.

With that of Dickens, in so far as the method of narrating the story is concerned, there is evidently little affinity. The narrative is not only plain and direct, but unencumbered to an extraordinary degree; we scarcely exaggerate in saying that in several of his books there is hardly a phrase, much less a character, which could be spared without loss to the story. The plot is only elaborate in the sense of being intricately woven, not for its possession of any large amount of detail, or for the development necessitating many characters. On the other hand, the method diverges from that of Reade by its absolute impersonality; the author practically never speaks *in propria persona*, or, if he does so, he speaks as a voice only, leaving us quite in the dark as to all personal idiosyncrasy. But the difference to be noted lies deeper than that, for in Wilkie Collins' stories the result is brought about by a sustained and definite action and reaction of character and circumstance, which is only in a very minor degree present in either Dickens or Reade.

It would be fair to say of the latter authors that their characters might have acted in many other stories, but of Collins that his stories could not have been acted by any other characters. The connection with the special plot is, in the first case, superficial; in the second, essential. I am not seeking now, remember, to compare these men to the advantage or disadvantage of any one of them; I am trying only to point out differences. What is needed at the present day is that we should admire all three a great deal more than we do, not that we should admire one at the expense of the others.

Mr. Wilkie Collins' first essay in novel-writing was an historical romance entitled *Antonina; or, the Fall of Rome*, and is remarkable chiefly for the fact that though possessing various merits, such as considerable power of descriptive writing, and clear perception of character, yet the work affords us no hint of the author's special faculty—the power of concentrating the interest of the story, and bringing all the actions of his characters into close relation therewith. In my opinion, a very dull, and quite unreadable book; and so the public apparently thought, for the work created no stir, and even after the author had achieved popularity, was seldom spoken of, much less read.

Well, we need only say that the book was a failure; whatever Mr. Wilkie Collins' gifts might be, evidently he had not as yet found their right direction. Accordingly, in the next story there is an

entirely new departure, and *Basil* takes us from ancient Rome to the very centre of modern London life: the story practically begins in an omnibus, and the chief characters are a managing clerk, and a linendraper's daughter.

When I think of the period in which this novel was written and published, I confess I find it difficult to understand the tolerance that was shown by the Press. The story deals as frankly with a certain phase of the affections as if by Daudet himself, and, indeed, I believe it was attacked in certain quarters on this score.¹

Shortly put, the story recounts how a young man of ancient family marries secretly the daughter of a successful linendraper, and submits to a restriction, imposed on him by her father, of leaving his wife at the church door, in order that, if possible, his father's consent may be obtained before the marriage is openly acknowledged. The motives of the linendraper in making this somewhat extraordinary arrangement are explained by a fear of losing his well-born son-in-law on the one hand, and the desire to gain time for completing the education of his daughter, and for selecting a favourable opportunity for winning the consent of his son-in-law's father. In the meantime, the managing clerk, who has hitherto assisted in educating the girl, and who has always intended to marry her himself, acquires great influence over her, and finally seduces her the very night before the year's probation expires. Through a series of accidents, Basil becomes a witness to his own dishonour, and the remainder of the book is taken up with his vengeance on the seducer and its consequences.

This, it will be observed, is a tolerably strong story, and can hardly be said to be a pleasant one; nor would it be worth while dwelling on the subject were it not that it shows the rise in our author of that peculiar faculty, the development of which was afterwards to render him unrivalled in his line. A single powerful motive, a single sustained purpose, runs throughout the book; thereto everything tends, and in connection therewith every incident occurs. Characters come and go in entire subordination to the part they have to play in the story, and yet they do this naturally. The action of the book depends on the influence exercised by character over circumstance; the determining impulse of each event can be traced back to a mental idiosyncrasy. This treatment makes the plot organic, and from this method Mr. Wilkie Collins has seldom departed. Those interested in physiological contrasts, can trace with pleasure throughout *Basil* the manner in which the varying idiosyncrasies and motives of the people concerned, combine to produce the catastrophe of the

¹ Ten years after the book was published, Collins wrote in the preface to a new edition, "I allowed the prurient misinterpretation of certain perfectly innocent passages in this book to assert itself as offensively as it pleased, without troubling myself to protest against an expression of opinion which aroused in me no other feeling than a feeling of contempt."

book—the pride of Basil's father; the over-credulity and timorousness of Basil himself; the terrified submission of Mrs. Sherwin, the mother of the heroine; the meanness and selfishness of her husband; the vanity and heartlessness of Margaret herself, are all as much factors in the catastrophe, as the deliberate, cold-blooded scheming of the villain of the story. Gradually, as one reads the book, a sense of inevitable calamity mingles with our interest: the final catastrophe comes almost as a relief. Here is the secret of Collins' power as a story-teller; other authors may construct a plot with as great ingenuity, or tell us a story of as entrancing interest, but no other writer has so well succeeded in producing upon his readers the same sense of inevitableness and reality; these plots are not only *possible*, they are *imperative*; not only might things have happened thus; they could not have happened otherwise.

Let us consider the means by which the author attained this perfection of tale-telling. Before we speak of his method in detail, hear what, in Mr. Collins' personal opinion, a work of fiction should be.

“Believing that the Novel and the Play are twin-sisters in the family of Fiction; that the one is a drama narrated, and the other is a drama acted; and that all the strong and deep emotions which the Play-writer is privileged to excite, the Novel-writer is privileged to excite also, I have not thought it either politic or necessary, while adhering to realities, to adhere to everyday realities only. In other words, I have not stooped so low as to assure myself of the reader's belief in the probability of my story, by never once calling on him for the exercise of his faith. Those extraordinary accidents and events which happen to few men, seemed to me to be as legitimate materials for fiction to work with—when there was a good object in using them—as the ordinary accidents and events which may, and do, happen to us all. By appealing to genuine sources of interest *within* the reader's own experience, I could certainly gain his attention to begin with; but it would be only by appealing to other sources (as genuine in their way) *beyond* his own experience, that I could hope to fix his interest and excite his suspense, to occupy his deeper feelings, or to stir his nobler thoughts.”

No statement could be more precise, or, with regard to the art of fiction, more correct; this is not only true, but covers, either expressly or by implication, the whole ground of legitimate story-telling. To have something worth the telling, and to say it in the clearest and most vivid manner, and in such a way as to excite the reader's suspense, stir his emotion, and excite his nobler aspirations—this is to be a story-teller indeed; and who would not be proud if

his work satisfied such conditions? At the risk of wearying my readers, I will repeat that on such or similar principles all our great novelists have *hitherto* worked. The chief foundation of the art of fiction is the drama, as every one who has heard a Neapolitan or an Eastern story-teller will readily admit; and the reason of this is that the most perfect presentment of a human being is not the analysis of his motives, but the embodiment of himself; the presenting him, so to speak, on the stage of your book, and letting him act there as he would do "on the boards," or as he would in that life of which his action "on the boards" is an imitation. In other words, for the purpose of story-telling, the dramatic is a more powerful form than the literary, than the analytical. Moreover, this form becomes more imperative in proportion to the interest of the story which is being told; indeed, at crucial moments even the most analytical of fiction-writers are forced into the simpler dramatic method; when they come to the point, their characters act their parts, not narrate them. One great difference between Wilkie Collins and other writers who more or less appreciate the force of this truth, is that he constructs his stories throughout on the above-mentioned principle; his characters reveal alike themselves and the work on which they are engaged, by their actions and speech. The author tells us comparatively little about them, and in many minor instances he tells us absolutely nothing. Think, for example, of the old servant, Gabriel Betteredge, in *The Moonstone*, who exhibits himself so clearly by means of his diary in the first few pages of the book that we know him as intimately as our personal friends.

"Well, there I was in clover, you will say. Placed in a position of trust and honour, with a little cottage of my own to live in, with my rounds on the estate to occupy me in the morning, and my accounts in the afternoon, and my pipe and my *Robinson Crusoe* in the evening—what more could I possibly want to make me happy? Remember what Adam wanted when he was alone in the Garden of Eden; and if you don't blame it in Adam, don't blame it in me.

"The woman I fixed my eye on, was the woman who kept house for me at my cottage. Her name was Selina Goby. I agree with the late William Cobbett about picking a wife. See that she chews her food well, and sets her foot down firmly on the ground when she walks, and you're all right. Selina Goby was all right in both these respects, which was one reason for marrying her. I had another reason, likewise, entirely of my own discovering. Selina, being a single woman, made me pay so much a week for her board and services. Selina, being my wife, couldn't charge for her board, and would have to give me her services for nothing. That was the point of view I looked

at it from. Economy—with a dash of love. I put it to my mistress, as in duty bound, just as I had put it to myself.

“ ‘I have been turning Selina Goby over in my mind,’ I said, ‘and I think, my lady, it will be cheaper to marry her than to keep her.’

“ My lady burst out laughing, and said, she didn’t know which to be most shocked at—my language or my principles. Some joke tickled her, I suppose, of the sort that you can’t take unless you are a person of quality. Understanding nothing myself but that I was free to put it next to Selina, I went and put it accordingly. And what did Selina say? Lord! how little you must know of women, if you ask that. Of course she said, Yes.

“ As my time grew nearer, and there got to be talk of my having a new coat for the ceremony, my mind began to misgive me. I have compared notes with other men as to what they felt while they were in my interesting situation; and they have all acknowledged that, about a week before it happened, they privately wished themselves out of it. I went a trifle further than that myself; I actually rose up, as it were, and tried to get out of it. Not for nothing! I was too just a man to expect she would let me off for nothing. Compensation to the woman, when the man gets out of it, is one of the laws of England. In obedience to the laws, and after turning it over carefully in my mind, I offered Selina Goby a feather bed and fifty shillings to be off the bargain. You will hardly believe it, but it is nevertheless true—she was fool enough to refuse.

“ After that it was all over with me, of course. I got the new coat as cheap as I could, and I went through all the rest of it as cheap as I could. We were not a happy couple, and not a miserable couple. We were six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. How it was I don’t understand, but we always seemed to be getting, with the best of motives, in one another’s way. When I wanted to go upstairs, there was my wife coming down; or when my wife wanted to go up, there was I coming down. That is married life, according to my experience of it.”

To return to our analysis of Mr. Wilkie Collins’ method; we find, on examining the books closely, that the essential strength of the various stories consists in their possession of two attributes which at first sight seem somewhat conflicting. These are the attributes of mystery and simplicity. No books are ever at the same time so straightforward and so intricate; the straightforwardness is in the execution, in the march of the narrative, the clear presentment of the characters, but the goal is nowhere in sight, nor to the end of

the book does the reader know whither he is being led. There are throughout, however, a feeling of sustained purpose, a connection of action, and a development of character, which impress the reader with the conviction of the author's sanity and trustworthiness. However intricate the plot may be, however numerous the people, we feel more and more certain, with every page we read, that every detail and every action, nay, and even every speech, is helping on the development of some purpose, which we cannot guess, but dimly foreshadow. The conviction that this is so, holds the interest as in a vice, and excites an attention to the less obvious parts of the story, which is proportionately intensified in the more exciting portions. I know no writer, for instance, living or dead, who has been able to touch the facts of Nature with so keen a human interest, and weld them so firmly to the incidents and emotions of his story. Descriptions of Nature in Mr. Wilkie Collins' hands, no matter how simply realistic they may appear in every detail, become, when viewed as a whole, in entire harmony with, and of considerable importance to, the purpose of his book; and it is strange to notice how uniformly successful this author has been in imparting to each description the exact sentiment which was dramatically appropriate to the part of the story in which it appears. Here is an instance from *Armada*—a description of a picnic party to the Norfolk Broads, remarkable not only for its delicate truth to Nature, but for a suggestiveness and underlying sense of mystery, which help to prepare the way for the fulfilment of the first vision in Armadale's dream :—

“An hour's steady driving from the Major's cottage had taken young Armadale and his guests beyond the limits of Midwinter's solitary walk, and was now bringing them nearer and nearer to one of the strangest and loveliest aspects of Nature, which the inland landscape, not of Norfolk only, but of all England, can show. Little by little, the face of the country began to change as the carriage approached the remote and lonely district of the Broads. The wheat-fields and turnip-fields became perceptibly fewer, and the fat green grazing grounds on either side grew wider and wider in their smooth and sweeping range. Heaps of dry rushes and reeds, laid up for the basket-maker and the thatcher, began to appear at the roadside. The old gabled cottages of the early part of the drive dwindled and disappeared, and huts with mud walls rose in their place. With the ancient church towers, and the wind and water mills, which had hitherto been the only lofty objects seen over the low marshy flat, there now rose all round the horizon, gliding slow and distant behind fringes of pollard willows, the sails of invisible boats moving on invisible waters. All the strange and startling anomalies presented by an inland agricultural district,



G. A. Storey - 1895

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isolated from other districts by its intricate surrounding network of pools and streams—holding its communication and carrying its produce by water instead of land—began to present themselves in closer and closer succession. Nets appeared on cottage palings; little flat-bottomed boats lay strangely at rest among the flowers in cottage gardens; farmer's men passed to and fro, clad in composite costume of the coast and the field, in sailors' hats and fishermen's boots, and ploughmen's smocks,—and even yet the low-lying labyrinth of waters, embosomed in its mystery of solitude, was a hidden labyrinth still. A minute more, and the carriages took a sudden turn from the hard high-road into a little weedy lane; the wheels ran noiselessly on the damp and spongy ground. A lonely outlying cottage appeared, with its litter of nets and boats. A few yards farther on, and the last morsel of the firm earth suddenly ended in a tiny creek and quay. One turn more, to the end of the quay, and there, spreading its great sheet of water, far, and bright, and smooth, on the right hand and the left—there, as pure in its spotless blue, as still in its heavenly peacefulness, as the summer sky above it, was the first of the Norfolk Broads."

It is worth while looking at that passage carefully for a moment, if only to notice the excessive ingenuity with which the author passes, without the slightest jerk, from pure description of Nature to the continuation of his narrative. You are taken, as it were, into the carriage which passes these various details of house, and field, and labourer; and still, as the horses trot, you are thinking of the Broad, and wondering why you cannot see it, till at the very last moment the reader arrives with the picnic party, and is ready to share their forthcoming experiences. This may seem a small point to dwell upon, but it is by the observance of small points such as these that Mr. Collins succeeds in impressing us with the reality of his stories. No reader can skip a description such as the one we have quoted; it is welded into the story.

The fact is, our author feels what every great landscape painter has always felt, and shown in his pictures, that the interest of landscape for most people depends on its relation to ourselves, the associations aroused thereby, and the significance which we find therein; and, feeling this, he immensely heightens the power of his narrative, by connecting the occurrence of certain incidents, with places which lend themselves, by their natural characteristics, to the emotions which he wishes to excite. In this special portion of *Armadale* he is seeking to prepare the reader's mind for the fulfilment of a dream vision, in such a manner as is to leave the reader in doubt whether the fulfilment be accidental or no.

Every line of this description of the Broads echoes back to the former description of the dream, and helps to arouse that sense of mystery, strangeness, and loneliness, which will prepare the reader's mind for "strange matters."

Let us recur to those characters which, as a rule, are the pivots on which the interest of a novel turns—the hero and heroine, and their love relations. Throughout all Collins' finer novels the interest turns not on these characters alone, but is almost equally concerned with every personage mentioned in the book. The hero and heroine in *Basil*, for instance, are treated with neither more nor less respect by the author than the rest of the "cast." The so-called hero of *The Woman in White* disappears for some hundreds of pages in the most vital portion of the book, without our even noticing his absence. *Armadale* and *The Moonstone* have quite certainly no hero or heroine at all; and though *No Name* is concerned almost entirely with the fortunes of one erring girl, she is never regarded from the heroine point of view, and is indeed, considering her earlier life, perhaps the most faulty character in the book. The result, to the present writer at least, is a delicious sense of freedom—one's interest has not been concentrated entirely in the fortunes of two personages, both of whom may to special readers be personally uninteresting—and our trust in the author's impartiality becomes absolute, when we mark the even-handed justice he displays towards his creations.¹

Hide and Seek, the book which followed *Basil* in order of date, shows a great advance in the development of Mr. Wilkie Collins' literary power. Here is at once a more pleasant story, and a better work of art; the interest, instead of being centred in a solitary figure, is distributed amongst the characters of the story, and there is a far less strained action necessary on their part to bring about the final solution. The book, too, has a definite moral purpose, which, though never obtruded, is, in the end, satisfactorily achieved. The author tries to show that happiness is perfectly possible, with a little kindness on one side, and a little resolution and patience on the other, to the life of a girl afflicted with even such a terrible calamity as that of being deaf and dumb, that such an one need not necessarily be either herself sorrowful, or burdensome to her companions. In fact, in *Hide and Seek*, instead of representing the person afflicted in this manner as an object of pity, the author insists throughout, and in the end wins the reader's assent to his assertion, that Mary Blyth's was a happy life.

I have called this the main purpose of the book, but the pur-

¹ A younger reader would probably not experience this pleasure, for indeed the old fashion of hero and heroine has almost passed away.

pose, though always traceable, is for the most part kept in the background. The plot turns upon an incident (or rather upon the consequences of an incident) which has happened before the story begins, and, briefly put, shows how a brother who, with infinite difficulty, discovers the story of his only sister's desertion and death, foregoes his vengeance upon the man who was responsible for both, for the sake of his friend, the betrayer's son.

In the order of Mr. Wilkie Collins' novels this work holds a very important place, not only for the increase of power of which I have spoken, but because this is the first time that the author's peculiar gift of humour distinctly shows itself; neither *Antonina* nor *Basil* contains, to the best of my recollection, any indication of humorous faculty; they are, to use a painter's expression, "a little tight" in their workmanship, the youth of the writer showing in a sort of self-conscious restraint, which does not allow him to look to the right hand or the left, to let himself go for a moment. But in *Hide and Seek* the author is not a bit afraid of his reader; he is not only going to tell him a story, he is going to tell it in his own way; and the result is a book which, despite a somewhat stern narrative and sorrowful episodes, yet literally brims over with humour, and shows the keenest appreciation of the humorous points of the various situations. I use this word "humour" advisedly, for "funny," in the correct sense of the term, Mr. Wilkie Collins is not, either here or in his later novels. There is a mordant quality about his laughter which is alien to the spirit of fun; he laughs like a man to whom sorrow is not unknown. In conclusion, I would say that the detailed charm of *Hide and Seek* lies in the minor sketches, especially in those of the artist and his bedridden wife, which are touched with the most gentle and yet incisive hand, and which show us two entirely lovable, and generously imperfect people. In a slight way, I know nothing in fiction prettier or more genuinely pathetic than the study of the good-hearted, ambitious, but comparatively incompetent artist, who, after his wife's first attack of serious illness, gives up his dreams of becoming a great historical and mythological painter, and, finding that he can sell for a few pounds his studies of still-life, deliberately restricts his art to the purpose of producing these insignificant pictures, in order to give his ailing wife every luxury and resource which she might have had, had he been a man of fortune as well as a man of heart.

Those who call Mr. Collins a sensational writer, would do well to study many passages such as these, which occur throughout his works—passages which show that he can not only deal with the strongest motives or the greatest eccentricities of human nature, but that he can understand, and love to linger long over, these tender

everyday affections, "which have one by one, and little by little, raised man from being no higher than the brute, to be only a little lower than the angels."¹

Here is the account of how the apparently fruitless, unselfish devotion to his art in happier days, recompenses the artist in the time of his affliction, when, after the first shock of his grief is over, he is able to turn his big canvases to the wall, and set to work again on a humbler scale, which is sanctified by a more human interest :—

"On the first day when, in obedience to her wishes, he sat before his picture again—the half-finished picture from which he had been separated for so many months—on that first day, when the friendly occupation of his life seemed suddenly to have grown strange to him; when his brush wandered idly among the colours; when his tears dropped fast on the palette every time he looked down on it; when he tried hard to work as usual, though only for half an hour, only on simple background places in the composition, and still the brush made false touches, and still the tints would not mingle as they should, and still the same words, repeated over and over again, would burst from his lips: 'Oh, poor Lavvie! oh, poor, dear, dear Lavvie!'—even then the spirit of that beloved art, which he had always followed so humbly and so faithfully, was true to its divine mission, and comforted and upheld him at the last bitterest moment when he laid down his palette in despair.

"While he was still hiding his face before the very picture which he and his wife had once innocently and secretly glorified together, in those happy days of its beginning that were never to come again, the sudden thought of consolation shone out in his heart, and showed him how he might adorn all his after-life with the deathless beauty of a pure and noble purpose. Thenceforth his vague dream of fame, and of rich men wrangling with each other for the possession of his pictures, took the second place in his mind; and, in their stead, sprang up the new resolution that he would win independently, with his own brush, no matter at what sacrifice of pride and ambition, the means of surrounding his sick wife with all those luxuries and refinements which his own little income did not enable him to obtain, and which he shrank with instinctive delicacy from accepting as presents bestowed by his father's generosity. Here was the consoling purpose which robbed affliction of half its bitterness already, and bound him and his art together by a bond more sacred than any that had united them before. In the very hour when this

¹ John Morley.

thought came to him, he rose without a pang to turn the great historical composition, from which he had once hoped so much, with its face to the wall, and set himself to finish an unpretending little 'study' of a cottage courtyard, which he was certain of selling to a picture-dealing friend. The first approach to happiness which he had known for a long, long time past, was on the evening of that day, when he went upstairs to sit with Lavinia, and, keeping secret his purpose of the morning, made the sick woman smile, in spite of her sufferings, by asking her how she should like to have her room furnished if she were the lady of a great lord, instead of being only the wife of Valentine Blyth.

"No one but himself ever knew what he had sacrificed in labouring to gain these things. The heartless people whose portraits he had painted, and whose impertinences he had patiently submitted to; the mean bargainers who had treated him like a tradesman; the dastardly men of business who had disgraced their order by taking advantage of his simplicity—how hardly and cruelly such insect natures of this world had often dealt with that noble heart! how despicably they had planted their small gadfly stings in the high soul which it was never permitted to them to subdue!"

It would be pleasant to say that *The Dead Secret*, which followed *Hide and Seek*, showed a further development of our author's art in the qualities of which I have been speaking. But this book is, on the contrary, less humorous, less genuine, and less tender than the one which preceded it; on the other hand, it is certainly more concentrated, and therefore, taken as a whole, more powerful. The weakness of the story, as a work of art, consists in the fact that our sympathies are never aroused for the protagonist of the story; despite the author's utmost efforts, we are not interested in Sarah Leeson. I think the reason for this is twofold. In the first place, Sarah Leeson is introduced to us from the very beginning with the burden of the secret overshadowing her; there is no special reason why we should care for this woman, who, from our first acquaintance with her, passes shrinking up and down the staircases, and sits trembling in the corridor. And, in the second place, the author in this instance has prepared his subject too elaborately; he makes his secret like a pancake, and keeps tossing it about from one pan to the other, hiding and seeking it; missing, getting nearer to, and farther from it, till at last the poor thing is scrabbled over with incident and description, like an Assyrian palimpsest, and still we do not know what it is, and, when we do know, we feel inclined to say: "Oh! is that all?" as at the end of a pointless story. And yet the book

is full of ingenuity, and, as in a house built by some misguided architect, we are continually opening doors that only reveal dark cupboards, and running up and down passages and steps, only to find ourselves where we started. The book is especially poor in its minor characters; Uncle Joseph, the German upholsterer, for example, with the music-box that Mozart gave to his grandfather, becomes, despite his virtues, a perfect nuisance to the reader. He is that most annoying of all the creations of the novelist, a good man with a tiresome eccentricity which we are not allowed to forget for a single moment, introduced, of course, as a *Deus ex machinâ*, and to give relief to the more sombre portions of the story. Uncle Joseph never fairly gets into the plot at all; he, so to speak, dances about outside, to the sound of his eternal music-box, and to the weariness of the reader. Perhaps one exception should in justice be made concerning the minor characters of *The Dead Secret*, and that is in favour of Mr. Phippen, the dyspeptic philosopher, who weighs his bread, and measures his tea, and yet, nevertheless, sees bilious spots dancing in front of him as he takes his morning constitutional. Mr. Phippen is delightful, but, most unfortunately, he only occurs in one scene of the story.

The Dead Secret would have been much improved had the author allowed his humorous faculty to have a little freer play. As it is, the book has sufficient interest to make you read it, but not sufficient to make you regret the revelation of the secret when it comes at last. With *The Dead Secret* ends what I should feel inclined to call the early period of Mr. Wilkie Collins' art; by the time the next book (*The Woman in White*) is published, the writer has entirely mastered his business, his "soft-shell" stage is at an end, and, as he would say himself, for good or evil the man stands revealed before us.

I do not purpose to say much, or indeed anything, in detail, about the plot of *The Woman in White*, which is too well known to need description, nor is the story such as can be easily explained in a brief outline; but of the character-drawing in this book, and its connection with the plot, I must speak somewhat minutely. This is the first book in which Mr. Wilkie Collins succeeds in entirely holding the reader's interest by the story alone, taken in connection with the characters by whom it is carried out. Gradually to this point has the author's power grown—to this point of welding together circumstance and character, and showing their interdependences, and the results that arise from their mutual action and reaction. Two weak points, and only two weak points, I find in the construction. Anne Catherick¹ is of necessity uninteresting, not only

¹ Otherwise, "the Woman in White."



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on account of her imbecile character, but because by the exigencies of the plot she is bound to be sacrificed fruitlessly, and so the author is forbidden by every rule of dramatic propriety to really arouse our interest in her ; this, therefore, is felt as a deficiency necessitated by the plot itself, and as such may be excused, if not pardoned.

The second point is to me a far more important one : an error in the actual art of the novel-writer—an error which would be almost unpardonable, did not our inartistic English public practically insist on such a mistake being committed in nine books out of ten. The point of which I am speaking is the anti-climax of Count Fosco's death, and Walter Hartright's trip to Paris. The book should end—the book actually does end, as far as all interest is concerned—in the scene between Count Fosco and Walter Hartright, in which the former confesses his share in the conspiracy ; this is not only the finest situation, but the finest scene, in the book—a scene which in combination of dialogue, narrative, and dramatic power, has probably never been surpassed in fiction ; and then, lo and behold ! we have some twenty more pages, containing a perfectly useless narrative of the erasure of Laura Fairlie's name from the tombstone, and the subsequent journey of Hartright to Paris, followed by his discovery of Count Fosco's body in the Morgue. Let us commit that worst of all impertinences—that of teaching a man his own business—and say boldly that the last episode should have been Hartright's departure from Count Fosco's lodgings, and his catching sight, as he left, of that Italian member of the "Brotherhood" (to which the Count belonged) whom Hartright had noticed on two previous occasions watching him. So the villain would have departed into the darkness whence he came, with the shadow of Nemesis stealing after him, and we should have been spared that irritating feeling, so common to readers of English fiction, that all our stories must be saddled with a definite moral ending, wherein every personage is rewarded or punished according to his deserts ; must also have all their incidents neatly finished up—as if the world ended at the end of the third volume. With these blemishes, and perhaps a slight feeling of disappointment with regard to the character of Hartright himself, the adverse criticism of *The Woman in White* must end.

This is a book which made an era in novel-writing, and may be said to have opened up a new view of the art—a view on which a whole subsequent school has been founded ; and yet, despite the thousands of so-called sensational novels which the last thirty years have seen, the prototype remains easily first, and this results from simple conditions, and rests upon the fact that the author has been able to combine a very true and noble human

feeling with his more passionate and tragical interests. The crimes of Count Fosco and Sir Percival Glyde would lose half their dramatic intensity, were they not contrasted with the unswerving sisterly devotion of Marian Halcombe; and the unselfish love of Walter Hartright; and these again would have little power to move us, were they not surrounded and, as it were, upheld by a multitude of other characters, for the most part indicated by slight touches, who are yet living, breathing realities. Walter's mother; Signor Pesca, the teacher of Italian; Miss Vesey, the old companion; Mr. Gilmore, the lawyer; Mr. Fairlie, the selfish *dilettante*; grim Mrs. Catherick herself—all of these are there, and not there only to play their part in the story, but to impress us with a sense of the everyday world, with its commonplace interests and actions, and so relieve and render natural the more salient portions of the story.

The most interesting character of the story is of course Count Fosco, who stands out from the villains of contemporary fiction as an almost solitary example of a scoundrel who makes no "damnable faces" over his villainy, and whose part in the story is not only to bring about the catastrophe. For Fosco in *The Woman in White* has, as he had in life, two almost distinct individualities, one of which issues in his overflowing vanity, his resplendent waistcoats, his white mice, and his passion for Rossini's music; while the other sits silently by in the shadow, waiting its time to strike the long-planned blow of the conspiracy. Perhaps the strongest part of the interest which *The Woman in White* inspires, is, due to the conviction with which the author succeeds in impressing us of Count Fosco's capability for better things, of the strange recesses in his character. We keep saying to ourselves, "What might not this man have done?" The overpowering influence of great strength of character, even when the direction of that strength is in the main an evil one, has never been shown in a work of fiction at once more subtly and more powerfully than here; every reader feels the fascination of this villain, and feels it, too, without losing his horror at his cold-bloodedness and crime. By clear, bold, broad touches is this effect produced, without a moment's pause in the course of the story.

I can only extract a small portion of the description of the Count which appears in Marian Halcombe's diary, but even this will be sufficient to show the power and subtlety of the author's analysis, and the clearness of outline with which from the first this character is presented:—

"And the magician who has wrought this wonderful transformation—the foreign husband who has tamed this once wayward Englishwoman till her own relations hardly know her again—the Count himself? What of the Count?"

"This, in two words. He looks like a man who could tame anything. If he had married a tigress instead of a woman, he would have tamed the tigress. If he had married *me*, I should have made his cigarettes as his wife does—I should have held my tongue when he looked at me, as she holds hers.

"I am almost afraid to confess it, even to these secret pages. The man has interested me, has forced me to like him. In two short days he has made his way straight into my favourable estimation—and how he has worked the miracle is more than I can tell.

"It may be his face. He is a most remarkable likeness, on a large scale, of the Great Napoleon. His features have Napoleon's magnificent regularity; his expression recalls the grandly calm, immovable power of the Great Soldier's face. This striking resemblance certainly impressed me, to begin with; but there is something in him besides the resemblance, which has impressed me more. I think the influence I am now trying to find is in his eyes. They are the most unfathomable grey eyes I ever saw; and they have at times a cold, clear, beautiful, irresistible glitter in them, which forces me to look at him, and yet causes me sensations, when I do look, which I would rather not feel.

"All the smallest characteristics of this strange man have something strikingly original and perplexingly contradictory in them. Fat as he is, and old as he is, his movements are astonishingly light and easy. He is as noiseless in a room as any of us women; and, more than that, with all his look of unmistakable mental firmness and power, he is as nervously sensitive as the weakest of us. He starts at every chance noise as inveterately as Laura herself. He winced and shuddered yesterday when Sir Percival beat one of the spaniels, so that I felt ashamed of my own want of tenderness and sensibility, by comparison with the Count.

"The relation of this last incident reminds me of one of his most curious peculiarities, which I have not yet mentioned—his extraordinary fondness for pet animals.

"Some of these he has left on the Continent, but he has brought with him to this house a cockatoo, two canary birds, and a whole family of white mice. He attends to all the necessities of these strange favourites himself, and he has taught the creatures to be surprisingly fond of him and familiar with him. The cockatoo, a most vicious and treacherous bird towards anybody else, absolutely seems to love him. When he lets it out of

its cage, it hops on to his knee, and claws its way up his great big body, and rubs its top-knot against his sallow double chin in the most caressing manner imaginable. He has only to set the door of the canaries' cages open, and to call them; and the pretty little cleverly-trained creatures perch fearlessly on his hand, mount his fat outstretched fingers one by one when he tells them to 'go upstairs,' and sing together as if they would burst their throats with delight when they get to the top finger. His white mice live in a little pagoda of gaily-painted wirework, designed and made by himself. They are almost as tame as the canaries, and they are perpetually let out, like the canaries. They crawl all over him, popping in and out of his waistcoat, and sitting in couples, white as snow, on his capacious shoulders. He seems to be even fonder of his mice than of his other pets, smiles at them, and kisses them, and calls them by all sorts of endearing names. If it be possible to suppose an Englishman with any taste for such childish interests and amusements as these, that Englishman would certainly feel rather ashamed of them, and would be anxious to apologise for them, in the company of grown-up people. But the Count, apparently, sees nothing ridiculous in the amazing contrast between his colossal self and his frail little pets. He would blandly kiss his white mice, and twitter to his canary birds, amid an assembly of English fox-hunters, and would only pity them as barbarians when they were all laughing their loudest at him."

In this description it is that the author's genius for depicting character shows its utmost height, for if Count Fosco had not been a human villain, the story of *The Woman in White* would have been unbearable: the cowardly, tyrannous selfishness of Sir Percival Glyde, the weak submission of his wife, the magnificent devotion to her sister of Marian Halcombe, would have had no foil and no relief. As it is, the woman and the man, Marian Halcombe and Count Fosco, the good and the evil spirits, stand opposite to one another, and fight for their respective interests amidst the weaker characters whose fortunes they decide, and, as I have said, so subtly is the villain conceived, that the balance of sympathy is never altogether on the side of his antagonist. Ought it to be?

That is the question to which the answer would not have been doubtful fifty years ago, and that is the question to which the affirmative answer, given by many people, has caused so much adverse criticism on Mr. Wilkie Collins' novels.

The answer which I should give here would be as follows:¹—

¹ A very partial answer, I admit, but space fails me to discuss the subject adequately.

That directly our sympathies are *entirely* withdrawn from any character whatsoever in a work of fiction, that character has for us practically no existence. He is a mere compound of words and phrases, and has no more the power to affect as a warning, than to encourage as an example. Out of the pages of *Frankenstein* there is no such thing as an unadulterated monster. Unless we can trace in any given character of fiction some possible likeness to ourselves, we cannot be either with or against. Take away the little touches which make Count Fosco human—his fondness for his wife, his bravery, his tenderness to animals, his love of music, his overflowing, harmless vanity—and you take away the whole vital quality of the man, and leave merely a bundle of attributes, for which no human being can afford to care. Another, and perhaps a better, instance of our author's perception of this truth is in the sympathy which he arouses in us for Captain Wragge (who is an unscrupulous little swindler in *No Name*), in the description of one of his interviews with the heroine, Magdalen Vanstone. The girl has been tried past her power of endurance, and has, in an outbreak of temper, said hard things to the Captain. Her apology touches some kindly feeling in the little swindler's heart, and there seems to be an instant glad recognition of the fact that he was not wholly base, in the way in which this momentary impulse is described by the author.

Magdalen Vanstone is speaking :

“‘You are a kinder man than I thought you were,’ she said ; ‘I am sorry I spoke so passionately to you just now. I am very, very sorry!’ The tears stole into her eyes, and she offered him her hand with the native grace and gentleness of happier days. ‘Be friends with me again,’ she said pleadingly ; ‘I’m only a girl, Captain Wragge ; I’m only a girl.’ He took her hand in silence, patted it for a moment, and then opened the door for her to go back into her room again. There was genuine regret in his face as he showed her that trifling attention. He was a vagabond and a cheat ; he had lived a mean, shuffling, degraded life ; but he was human, and she had found her way to the lost sympathies in him, which not even the self-degradation of a swindler's existence could wholly destroy. ‘Damn the breakfast,’ he said, when the servant came in for her orders ; ‘go to the inn directly, and say I want a carriage and pair at the door in an hour's time.’ ‘She has rubbed the edge off my appetite,’ he said to himself, with a forced laugh ; ‘I’ll try a cigar and a turn in the open air.’”

Some two years subsequently to *The Woman in White* (our author has rarely had less than two years to prepare each of his important novels), *No Name*, from which the above quotation is taken, appeared ;

—a book which, despite several minor blemishes, is, in my opinion, the most fascinating, as *Armadale* is the most important, of all Mr. Wilkie Collins' works. "Here is one more book that depicts the struggle of a human creature under those opposing influences of Good and Evil which we have all felt, which we have all known." These words, which I have extracted from the Preface, form the keynote of the book which tells the story of Magdalen Vanstone, her sins, her repentance, and her punishment. Space forbids me to say anything of the plot or the details of this work, but, in justice to the author, it must be pointed out that no better proof could be desired of his genuineness as an artist than its mere existence, considering the circumstances under which it was written. Think for a moment how keen was the temptation to an author, who had at last, after ten years of fiction-writing, made a gigantic and indubitable success in a very special and original manner, to repeat in his next work the same method, and try to catch the public in a similar way. On the contrary, he waits for two years, and then starts on an entirely different plan, content to let the author of *The Woman in White* be forgotten while he solicits our favour as the author of *No Name*. And why? Here is the explanation in his own words:—

"To pass from the characters to the story, it will be seen that the narrative related in these pages has been constructed on a plan which differs from the plan followed in my last novel [*The Woman in White*] and in some other of my books published at an earlier date. The only secret contained in this book is revealed midway in the first volume. From that point all the main events of the story are purposely foreshadowed before they take place, my present design being to rouse the reader's interest in following the train of circumstances by which these foreseen events are brought about. In trying this new ground, I am not turning my back in doubt on the ground which I have passed over already; my one object in following a new course is to enlarge the range of my studies in the art of writing fiction, and to vary the form in which I make my appeal to the reader, as attractively as I can."

Nowadays, I confess that I know no novel-writer who could honestly put the above in a Preface.

From this work of *No Name* I take the following extract, typical of the author's power both in giving the dramatic intensity of a situation, and connecting it with our sympathies by little touches of natural effect and sympathy. Driven to the brink of committing suicide by the horror with which her contemplated marriage inspires her, Magdalen Vanstone is sitting by her open window in the early

morning, watching a little fleet of fishing-boats drift past. She determines to set her life upon the hazard of the number which cross the window in a certain time.

“ If in half an hour an even number passed, the sign given should be a sign to live ; if the uneven number prevailed, the end should be death. With that final resolution she rested her head against the window, and waited for the ships to pass. . . . Two minutes to the end of the half-hour, and seven ships ; twenty-nine, and nothing followed in the wake of the seventh ship. The minute-hand of the watch moved on half-way to thirty, and still the white, heaving sea was a misty blank. Without moving from the window, she took the poison in one hand, and raised her watch in the other. As the quick seconds counted each other out, her eyes, quick as they turned from the watch to the sea, from the sea to the watch, looked for the last time at the sea, and saw the Eighth Ship. She never moved ; she never spoke. The death of thought, the death of feeling, seemed to have come over her already. She put back the poison mechanically on the ledge of the window, and watched, as in a dream, the ship gliding smoothly on its silent way, gliding till it melted into the shadow, gliding till it was lost in the mist. The strain on her mind relaxed when the messenger of life had passed from her sight. ‘ Providence ? ’ she whispered faintly to herself, ‘ or chance ? ’ Her eyes closed and her head fell back. When the sense of life returned to her the morning sun was warm on her face, the blue heaven looked down on her, and the sea was a sea of gold. . . . The maid entered the room, remained there a moment or two, and came out again, closing the door gently. ‘ She looks beautiful, sir,’ said the girl, ‘ and she’s sleeping as quietly as a new-born child.’ ”

The book which succeeded *No Name* was *Armada*, which, on the whole, must be considered the greatest of Mr. Wilkie Collins’ novels. It has all the interest and sustained purpose of *The Woman in White*, while drawn on a much larger scale, and showing a much wider knowledge of character. If only for the intricacy of the plot, and for the manner in which that plot is worked out over the lapse of years, and by means of a large number of diverse characters, the work would remain of typical excellence ; but the merit is more than this. The romance is a successful attempt to deal from the imaginative point of view with the doctrines of heredity, both physical and moral. The causes of the story are all in the first generation, and all the incidents in the second generation are the results of the earlier action. It is a story of the effects produced by a woman’s weakness and a man’s crime—a weakness which is

reflected, though on the good side instead of the bad, in the succeeding generation ; and a crime, of which the strength alone survives in the child of its author, inspiring him with a passionate determination to shield the life of the son of the man whom his father murdered, at all hazards to his own life, and at all costs to his own happiness. This is the better nature of the chief actor of the book, but therewith exists a more morbid strain of feeling, which prompts him to doubt whether, despite all his efforts, he will not bring fatal mischance to his friend, and the vital portion of the book is the story of his mental struggle, of the incidents which determine his action, and of the final catastrophe through which the solution is found.

What I have ventured to call the mental and moral doctrine of heredity, is, amongst other causes, worked out by the author making the instrument of danger to the son, the same woman, who, as a child, was the instrument of his mother's deception. This character, who stands to the female villains of fiction in the same relation that Count Fosco does to the male, lingers in the memory, despite her crimes and her heartlessness, with an almost terrible insistency ; and in her final punishment, brought about, with a daring truth to reality, by her fulfilment of the one good instinct of her nature, we feel almost as much for her as though all her acts had been equally blameless with her death for the man she loved. I am here, no doubt, treading on delicate ground ; we should have, the moralists tell us, no sympathy with a criminal who only suffers for her sins, without abjuring them ; but, human nature being so piebald, I confess to a sympathy with Mr. Wilkie Collins' disposition to find something which is admirable, or at least lovable, in even the black sheep of the community. They are so much in the hands of fate, that we may well afford to be a little extra kind to them. Such is a hint of the story and the motives of *Armadale* ; but I can give no idea of the richness of incident with which these main objects are surrounded, or with which they are worked out, or of the wealth of character-perception which the book displays, or of the unforced and many-sided humour, or of the power of the culminating tragedy.

In an earlier portion of this paper I have given a quotation from *Armadale* in order to show Mr. Collins' power of interweaving natural scenery and human emotion. Here is another little extract to substantiate what I have said as to the humour of the book :—

“The gardener, who still stood where he had stood from the first, immovably waiting for his next opportunity, saw it now, and gently pushed his personal interests into the first gap of silence that had opened within his reach since Allan's appearance on the scene.



LE JOUR DE LA VISITE A L'HOPITAL. — J. GEOFFROY

“‘I humbly bid you welcome to Thorpe Ambrose, sir,’ said Abraham Sage; beginning obstinately with his little introductory speech for the second time. ‘My name——’

“Before he could deliver himself of his name, Miss Milroy looked accidentally in the horticulturist’s pertinacious face, and instantly lost her hold on her gravity beyond recall. Allan, never backward in following a boisterous example of any sort, joined in her laughter with right good-will. The wise man of the garden showed no surprise and took no offence. He waited for another gap of silence, and walked in again gently with his personal interests, the moment the two young people stopped to take breath.

“‘I have been employed in the grounds,’ proceeded Abraham Sage, irrepressibly, ‘for more than forty years——’

“‘You shall be employed in the grounds for forty more if you’ll only hold your tongue and take yourself off!’ cried Allan, as soon as he could speak,

“‘Thank you kindly, sir,’ said the gardener, with the utmost politeness, but with no present signs either of holding his tongue or of taking himself off.

“‘Well?’ said Allan.

“Abraham Sage carefully cleared his throat, and shifted his rake from one hand to the other. He looked down the length of his own invaluable implement with a grave interest and attention, seeing, apparently, not the long handle of a rake, but the long perspective of a vista with a supplementary personal interest established at the end of it. ‘When more convenient, sir,’ resumed this immovable man, ‘I should wish respectfully to speak to you about my son. Perhaps it may be more convenient in the course of the day? My humble duty, sir, and my best thanks. My son is strictly sober. He is accustomed to the stables, and he belongs to the Church of England—without encumbrances.’ Having thus planted his offspring provisionally in his master’s estimation, Abraham Sage shouldered his invaluable rake, and hobbled slowly out of view.”

I have said that with *Armada* the power of Wilkie Collins, in my opinion, culminated, but the book which succeeded it was certainly, more immediately popular, and, by those who like their fiction of a light character, is generally regarded as this author’s most amusing work. It is certainly one, if it be the least important, of his four

finest novels ; and, if we consider it purely from the point of view of handicraft, I do not know that it does not deserve to be placed first of all, if only because of the unhesitating clearness and rapidity of the narrative, and the manner in which the reader's attention is never allowed to falter for a single instant. It contains also two studies of character which are, in their way, unique—that of Gabriel Betteredge,¹ the old family servant, devoted to his pipe and his *Robinson Crusoe*, and that of Sergeant Cuff, the one detective in fiction whom it is a pleasure to remember. The story of the book is well known. It deals with the theft of a celebrated diamond, entitled the *Moon-stone*, and its final restitution to the Hindoo idol which represents Brahma in his character of the *Moon-god*. I have given instances before in this article of our author's tenderness, his perception and delineation of character, his natural sympathy, his humour, and his concentration of dramatic effect ; let me here give a single instance of his imaginative faculty—the account of how the stone is set once more in the forehead of the great idol by the three Brahmins who have compassed its recovery :—

“ Looking back down the hill, the view presented the grandest spectacle of Nature and Man in combination that I have ever seen. The lower slopes of the eminence melted imperceptibly into a grassy plain, the place of the meeting of three rivers. On one side the graceful winding of the waters stretched away, now visible, now hidden by trees, as far as the eye could see. On the other, the waveless ocean slept in the calm of the night. People this lovely scene with tens of thousands of human creatures, all dressed in white, stretching down the sides of the hill, overflowing into the plain, and fringing the nearer banks of the winding rivers. Light this half of the pilgrims by the wild red flames of cressets and torches, streaming up at intervals from every part of the innumerable throng. Imagine the moonlight of the East pouring in unclouded glory over all—and you will form some idea of the view that met me when I looked forth from the summit of the hill.

“ A strain of plaintive music, played on stringed instruments and flutes, recalled my attention to the hidden shrine.

“ I turned, and saw on the rocky platform the figures of three men. In the central figure of the three I recognised the man to whom I had spoken in England when the Indians appeared on the terrace at Lady Verinder's house. The other two who had been his companions on that occasion, were no doubt his companions also on this.

“ One of the spectators, near whom I was standing, saw me start.

¹ See quotation on p. 252.

In a whisper he explained to me the apparition of the three figures on the platform of rock.

“They were Brahmins (he said) who had forfeited their caste in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage. On that night the three men were to part. In three separate directions they were to set forth as pilgrims to the shrines of India. Never more were they to look on each other's faces. Never more were they to rest on their wanderings, from the day which witnessed their separation, to the day which witnessed their death.

“As those words were whispered to me the plaintive music ceased. The three men prostrated themselves on the rock before the curtain which hid the shrine. They rose—they looked on one another—they embraced. Then they descended separately among the people. The people made way for them in dead silence. In three different directions I saw the crowd part, at one and the same moment. Slowly the grand white mass of the people closed together again. The track of the doomed men through the ranks of their fellow-mortals was obliterated. We saw them no more.

“A new strain of music, loud and jubilant, rose from the hidden shrine. The crowd around me shuddered and pressed together.

“The curtain between the trees was drawn aside, and the shrine was disclosed to view.

“There, raised high on a throne—seated on his typical antelope, with his four arms stretching towards the four corners of the earth—there, soared above us, dark and awful in the mystic light of heaven, the god of the Moon. And there, in the forehead of the deity, gleamed the yellow Diamond, whose splendour had last shone on me in England from the bosom of a woman's dress!

“Yes! after the lapse of eight centuries, the Moonstone looks forth once more over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began. How it has found its way back to its wild native land, by what accident or by what crime the Indians regained possession of their sacred gem, may be in your knowledge, but it is not in mine. You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it for ever.

“So the years pass and repeat each other; so the same events revolve in the cycles of time. What will be the next adventures of the Moonstone? Who can tell?”

I would fain deal with the remaining works of our author in some detail, but this already over-long essay warns me, if I would not exhaust my readers' patience, to a conclusion. Perhaps, it is as well, for with *The Moonstone* comes to an end the best work of our author. In greater or lesser degree each of the succeeding books shows either a decline in the interest of the story, or in the relation between the story and some thesis which the author desired to enforce, or some problem of moral eccentricity or physical deficiency which he sought to solve or analyse.

The use of the Scotch marriage laws in *Man and Wife* is perhaps permissible, but who has ever read that book without regretting the special pleading against athletic sports, and the misrepresentation into which it betrays the author.

Poor Miss Finch, despite passages of much tenderness and beauty, and many of exquisitely unforced humour, errs in a similar manner in the epilepsy incidents; and *The Law and the Lady* takes us back again to Scotch law, and an unpleasant study of human deformity, mental and physical, in one of the principal characters.

The New Magdalen, which appeared between the two last-mentioned books, is, it is true, free from any similar unpleasantness, but the story is very slight, and scarcely to be regarded as more than a plea for the possible social and moral regeneration of a repentant Magdalen; and in a lesser degree for a more enlightened and Christian view of political economy than is to be found in Mill or Ricardo. To these succeeded other works of which I will not here speak in detail; their names and dates are given in the bibliography.

One peculiar characteristic of Wilkie Collins' writing is its great popularity with the reading public, not only in England, but in many lands *ayont the sea*. This is hardly to be explained by a little easy talk about the skill with which the plots were constructed, for a book is not a piece of mosaic, admirable for its ingenuity alone, and, to tell the truth frankly, nine-tenths of the reading public neither know nor care whether a plot be constructed well or ill. The hypothesis of plot construction simply does not explain the facts, and has to be abandoned. Was it possibly the case that the writer's popularity and the frequent critical censure sprang from the same or an allied cause? and if so, what was that cause? Could

there be found in these novels any single quality inimitable by, or at all events usually unpossessed by, other writers, and any defect from which the ordinary English novelist is free? and were both defect and quality such as would probably call down the Olympian fire from the Critical Heaven? Before attempting to answer this question let us think for a moment, what is the necessary possession of a story-teller whose books are to become popular in other countries than his own, and through the medium of a foreign tongue? At first sight we shall be tempted to say that the question of subject is all-important; that the incidents should be such as are not wholly foreign to the experience of the alien nations; that there should be a comparative absence of local allusions and topics, such as are peculiar to the land of the author; and that the general sentiment of the story should not be an exclusively national one. As a matter of experience, however, we find that this is not the case. If we think, for instance, of the French novels which have been and are most popular, we shall be met with the infinite detail of Balzac and Zola, the local colour of Victor Hugo, the provincialisms of Georges Sand, the intensely Gallic sentiment of Dumas, Feuillet, and De Musset, and the phases of Parisian and provincial social life which form the staple of the art of Daudet, Sardou, and Ohnet.

But I think we do find, in all these authors who have stood the test of translation sufficiently long to enable us to say that their popularity is due to more than accident or whim of fashion, that the local colour or detail, the sentiment or the social life, the provincialism or urbanism of the story must, if we are to accept it in a foreign tongue, be not an end in itself, but simply the vehicle of expressing some idea, some truth, which is common or interesting to all nations, and that in proportion as this truth, this idea, is valuable, originally stated, vitally bound up with the incidents narrated, so will the work retain its reader's interest amidst scenes and people, and by the help of customs and incidents, of which he may know nothing, and care less.

The secret of so much fine English artistic work remaining incomprehensible to foreigners is, that we have too often neglected to found our themes upon a sufficiently far-reaching and unparochial idea. Over and over again do we find in English writers and English artists this neglect of the essential, in favour of the superficial. The realism which stops short at the delineation of the outside of the cup and platter, is a realism which is wholly and almost exclusively our national possession. There is a deep-seated distrust of *idea* in the English character, which is as evident in our art as it is in our politics; and as we cannot live entirely upon disconnected and unsystematised facts, we take to bind them that which is the very antithesis of idea, namely convention.

No doubt a great deal of trouble is saved by having a substitute for thought in the shape of some ready-made doctrine, to which, willy-nilly, circumstances must be shaped. And in this, our special intellectual torpidity, we, consciously or unconsciously, have resented and do resent in our painting, as in our fiction (we hardly tolerate it even in our poetry), the introduction of novel views of life, passion, and action, which have for their sanction thought and truth, rather than usage and convention.

But the novel or unconventional ideas which we Englishmen dislike so much, are found by foreign readers a welcome change; with them they receive the acceptance which we only give to methods we have ourselves proved to be sound, and the French, German, or Italian reader who once gains a safe foothold in the leading motive or idea of an English story, can easily surround it with such details of local colour, custom, or incident—no matter how alien to his experience—as the author may furnish.

Now, in this connection be pleased to look at the following tables, which give, with briefest notes of subject-matter, the titles of Wilkie Collins' chief (and some of his minor) works. It will be easily seen therefrom, how fully justified I am in claiming for him an underlying purpose, idea, or theory which vitalises the story through which it is enforced, which gives to the work that cosmopolitanism, which makes it readable alike in London and Paris, New York or Yokohama, Sydney or Timbuctoo, or wherever men and women meet, live, love, suffer, and enjoy.

THE PRINCIPAL WORKS OF WILKIE COLLINS

Biography of William Collins, R.A. (His father.)	1848
Antonina; or, The Fall of Rome An historical novel. A failure (his only one).	1850
Rambles beyond Railways Notes on a Cornish tour.	1851
Basil: a Story of Modern Life A powerful story, with an unpleasant motive. Written as an autobiography of the hero. Essentially a tragedy, the oncoming calamity felt in every successive page more and more clearly. Note that in this first book there is no humorous relief whatever.	1852
Hide and Seek As tender and pathetic a story as Wilkie Collins ever wrote, and very full of humour. Here the motive of the tale is the study of the affliction of deafness and dumbness. It is remarkable that the author represents the compensations and alleviations of the calamity, more than its sorrows. Note also, that the author's protests against conventional religion and Pharisaism here make their appearance for the first time.	1854



TO A PAIR OF SLIPPERS.— J. BERNARD PATRIDGE

Imp. DRAGER & LEBREUR, PARIS

After Dark 1856
A good collection of stories, with a connecting thread of narrative.

The Dead Secret 1857
A study of character. Here blindness is treated on the same principle as in *Hide and Seek*.

The Queen of Hearts 1859
A collection of stories bound together with a narrative thread after the Charles Dickens fashion. Remark, however, that the intense dramatic realisation of Collins shows clearly in the vivid life here given to this narrative connecting-link, and that all the personages therein are careful and, in their way, elaborate character-studies.

The Woman in White 1860
Kept Thackeray up all night to read ; ran into seven editions in a few weeks, and probably excited greater public interest than any novel of even that period.

No Name¹ 1862
On the whole the finest of Wilkie Collins' works. There is in it no study of disease, no secret worth speaking of, and curiously little incident. The story hinges entirely on one character, Magdalen Vanstone, and she sustains the burden easily. Round her from the very first all the other characters are grouped, and it is worth notice that in the opening chapter of the story, Wilkie Collins deliberately *sets the stage* for the entry of his heroine, just as might be done in the theatre : first the comedy of the servants, next the minor *dramatis personæ*, all leading up to the sudden burst of action with which Magdalen in another moment dashes into view on the dingy old oaken stairs with the suddenness of a flash of light, and clearing the last three steps into the hall at a jump, presents herself breathless in the breakfast-room to make the family circle complete.

My Miscellanies 1863
Sketches of various kinds.

Armadale 1866
A study of heredity, and the first appearance of the supernatural in Collins' important novels. The most elaborate of the author's works, and in some respects the most powerful. Specially notable for revealing more clearly than in earlier books Collins' descriptive power. See, for instance, the account here of the Norfolk Broads, with its underlying suggestion of mystery and terror ; the description of the German watering-place, with the townswomen knitting and gossiping while they wait for the invalids ; and, perhaps finest of all, the picture of the wrecked ship and the *Sound* at night.

The Moonstone 1868
After *The Woman in White* perhaps the most generally popular of his stories—a Chinese puzzle in literature, of which, perhaps, no reader has ever yet guessed the secret. Principally delightful, however, for two characters—the old house-steward, Gabriel Betteredge, and the rose-growing Detective, Sergeant Cuff. Note that here again Collins returns to his medical and scientific experiences, and makes the irregular action of a narcotic the pivot of the whole book.

¹ See also the Preface to *No Name*, quoted on page 266.

Man and Wife 1870

The much-attacked attack upon the brutalising effect of athletic sports, or rather of the undue enthusiasm aroused by, and attention given to, athletic sports in England. Here in great measure the author not only lived to see the first criticism on his work reversed, but even to see the public growing to be of his mind with regard to this subject. Athletic sports as a means of arousing natural enthusiasm have had their day; they are now rightly regarded as good things in their place and in moderation. That here Wilkie Collins overstated his case there is no doubt. But how far it was necessary at that time to so overstate it in order to gain a hearing, is difficult to say. This book has also a second aim, the exhibition of the injustice which may be caused by the present condition of the Scotch Marriage Laws.

Poor Miss Finch 1872

A corresponding study of blindness (in a woman) to that of dumbness in *Hide and Seek*. Note also the epilepsy and its cure, and their intimate relation to the plot.

The New Magdalen 1873

A plea for the regeneration of a fallen woman, and for a more Christian view of political economy in so far as it is concerned with the labour question.

The Law and the Lady 1875

Chiefly directed against the Scotch verdict of *Not proven*, as *Man and Wife* was against the Scotch marriage laws.

Two Destinies 1876

A mystic tale, founded on the old notion of two souls destined from their birth for one another.

The Haunted Hotel 1878

A weird but not wholly successful Venetian ghost story.

The Fallen Leaves 1879

A further advance in the direction of Socialism, and another and more daring treatment of the Social Evil question. Perhaps the most daring book from the Philistine point of view which has ever been published in England.

{	A Rogue's Life from his Birth to his Marriage	1879
	The Black Robe	1881
	Heart and Science	1883
	I say No	1884
	The Guilty River	1886
	(A shilling dreadful.)	
	The Evil Genius	1886
	Little Novels	1887
	The Legacy of Cain	1887-8

Of these later novels, fine in detail as several of them are, I would, here and now, be silent. Any adequate criticism of them, even in the shape of a note, would have to take account of the author's failing power, and this is not the place or the time at which that can fitly be done.

Blind Love.

In course of publication, the last chapters being finished, according to Wilkie Collins' *scenario*, by Mr. Walter Besant, this arrangement having been made some little time before the author's death.

MINOR WORKS OF WILKIE COLLINS

The following are some of the chief short stories, plays, and sketches published separately, chiefly in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* :—

The Dream Woman—published in *Household Words*. (Subsequently rewritten and enlarged for reading in America.)

Mr. Wray's Cash-box.

The Yellow Mask.

A Terribly Strange Bed.

Please Employ Major Namby.

The Cruise of the Tomtit.

John Jago's Ghost. (Published first, I think, in America.)

Miss or Mrs. ? (Holiday Number of *Graphic* or *Illustrated* (?).)

Plays—¹ The Woman in White. (Olympic Theatre. Successful, keeps the stage.)

¹ The New Magdalen. (Olympic Theatre. Has been several times revived ; very successful.)

¹ Man and Wife. (Prince of Wales' Theatre. Successful, but not a good play, saved by Coghlan's magnificent acting ; Bancroft also was very good.)

The Moonstone 1887

Miss Gwilt. (Version of *Armada*, adapted chiefly by M. Regnier. Globe Theatre. Unsuccessful.)

Rank and Riches. (Adelphi Theatre. A failure.) . . . 1883

The Lighthouse and The Frozen Deep . . . 1856-7

Both written for amateur performance, but played in semi-public, first at Tavistock House, and afterwards at the Gallery of Illustration, and both received with great enthusiasm, partly, no doubt, owing to the acting of Charles Dickens ; but both are good forcible pieces, with plenty of strong situations. *The Lighthouse* was afterwards played at the Olympic. *The Frozen Deep* was played by special command before the Queen.²

¹ Continental (translated) and American versions of these plays were subsequently produced successfully.

² *No Name* was, I believe, dramatised by the author, but never put upon the stage. I think I remember his telling me that it would not "come right."

We are now in a position, I think, to answer the question why it is that Wilkie Collins' books are at once so popular with foreign readers, and so frequently sniffed at by literary critics. The reason being that nearly every one of them, and every one of the finest, is, as will be seen from the foregoing list, inspired by a single and important motive, is governed by one dominant idea, which is to the action of the characters, and the scenes of the story, as is the principle of life in the human body, to the muscular and nerve action.

With this, these notes, in which I have endeavoured to show something of the nature, and give some idea of the extent, of Wilkie Collins' genius, may fitly come to a close. My endeavour has been less to criticise the writer's style than to reveal the breadth and power of his genius, by the most indisputable of all methods, the method of quotation. I have endeavoured to advance nothing which I was not prepared to prove, and which, so far as my space has allowed me, I have not afforded the reader the opportunity to verify; and I have carefully forbore to contrast Wilkie Collins' work with that of special living writers, who are at the present moment in greater popular favour. No one will feel more keenly than myself the inadequacy of this paper from a literary point of view; but I shall be content if it help ever so little in the appreciation of this author, who has probably given more keen and harmless pleasure to the last and present generation than any living writer, and yet for whom I seldom hear a generous word spoken, or read a criticism which recognises the service he has done, the genius he has shown, and the noble purpose which always directed his work.

Let me now, leaving for the moment the question of the merit of Wilkie Collins' writing, say here one word as to those personal qualities which have endeared him to his friends. Those friends *know*, beyond the reach of controversy, that he was one of England's greatest novelists, and also that in an age of self-advertisement, jealousy, and pretence, Collins was a type—not without faults, but still a type—of a genuine, kind-hearted, helpful-to-others *man*. He had blood, as well as brains, generosity, as well as intelligence, artistic pride and purpose in his work, as well as popular success. Well, as he could do his work, that work was done; truly and rightly as he could think, he wrote; and in the pride of his craftsmanship, and the security of a few faithful friends he lived his life, seeking for no reward of public appreciation or honour that did not come to him legitimately, and incidentally from the performance of his art. Perhaps, as I have said elsewhere, it is a little thing to have written stories so well that the whole world has listened to them gladly for forty years, and listens to them still. Let us grant to the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Saturday Review*, and the Zolaists and the *ballade-*

mongers, that this *was* a little thing ; but very certainly it was much to remain unspoiled through fame and censure, through popularity and neglect, through youth and age, through the long years when famous friend after friend passed away, and left him lingering here, still faithfully toiling in the service of his art, and still to keep that fresh, unspotted, kindly heart, with which he had won his way to equality of friendship and honour with those great dead writers from whom the critics would to-day disassociate him.

Men and women write to me in a confidence which I must respect, and tell me the same story of how unselfishly this man helped them when they were young and struggling. I, whom the journalistic world is always calling cynical and contemptuous, know how, with no slightest call upon him, towards the end of his life, jaded, suffering, and with but insufficient strength for his daily work, he helped me freely, unaffectedly, and continually ; and when I read, as I have read lately in paper after paper, from writers who are unworthy in a literary, much less in a personal sense, to unlace the latchet of his shoe, that this was a man whom the nation should *not* honour, I wonder, indeed, where honour should be bestowed by a nation upon an artist, if not here—where world-wide fame, unsparing artistic effort and achievement from youth to age, unite with a private life which respected alike the sanctities of friendship, the claims of literary brotherhood, the duties of mercy, charity, and truth, the obligation to speak in censure of every worldly convention that made for unrighteousness, affectation, or injustice. *Whether it be wise in men to do such deeds I do not know ; at least it is wise in States to honour them.* So, or in some such fashion, spoke Sir William Temple, and his words apply well here. *A sensation novelist only!* Yes, if you will have it so ; but a novelist whose sensations never exalted an unworthy cause, whose tongue never faltered in obedience to public whim, and whose words pleaded the cause of suffering humanity, of the animal creation, of all things and people against whom the self-righteous, the unthinking, and the cruel are wont to be banded together.

From one point of view it matters not a whit—whether England says, in raising some remembrance to him, This is one of those sons of whom I am proud—but to England it matters much. She can receive honour from him, from her dead writer, in bestowing, even now, that recognition which in another land would have been given in life, or she can stand on one side and ignore the claim, and refuse for the last time the tardy recompense. At least this man's monument is secure, even though it be not builded at St. Paul's or Westminster, for it stands firm in the hearts of his friends, in each unselfish humanitarian impulse which inspired his pen, and in the

pleasure he has given to millions for wellnigh half a century. That it should have been left to me, the youngest of his disciples, to plead, and possibly plead in vain, his claims upon our national regard, is surprising and pitiable enough ; but so it is, and I trust that the older and more famous men, whose words would have carried more weight, will have patience with the inadequacy of mine, for at least the plea is genuine. For thirty years I have honoured and enjoyed his work, for a few too brief years I have known and loved the man, and if I have succeeded in even making one Englishman feel more gratefully towards the last of our great novelists, I shall be able to bear without repining the many sneers and insults which have been levelled at me during the past few days for seeking to give him this last poor honour of remembrance.¹

¹ This was written at the end of 1889. In the next few months I did what I could to get erected some worthy memorial of Wilkie Collins. My success was very partial : the press held aloof, or were adverse ; the authorities of Westminster and St. Paul's alike refused to allow any monument to be erected in their precincts ; the general reading public were indifferent. A few of Collins' friends and some brother artists in literature, painting, and the drama, only subscribed. I undertook to form a small Wilkie Collins Memorial Library of works of fiction to be presented to the People's Palace. This is being done, and will, I trust, be completed before these lines come before the public. The long delay has not been entirely due to my own fault, but I feel that I owe for it an apology to both the People's Palace and the subscribers to the Memorial.



LISETTE

S. COURTOIS

From the original drawing in the possession of the author

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE TENDENCIES OF FRENCH ART IN 1883.



HERE is not only a difference of degree, there is a distinction in kind, between the annual exhibitions of pictures in France and England, known as the Salon and the Royal Academy. The former is not only a national, but an international show; the latter, though admitting specimens of foreign work, is practically a collection of English paintings, and is chiefly the expression of the prejudices and sympathies of our own people. Paris is still the great art-school of the world, and the pupils who study under Parisian artists are drawn from every country to that great centre. Here they learn their business and imbibe their art principles; and to the great annual exhibitions they send their works long after their student days have passed away, secure of space for their pictures, and confident of the liberal consideration of what is after all the greatest artistic community in the world—the community of French artists.

The immense space at the disposal of the jury, no less than the principle of universal suffrage by which that jury is chosen, affords to every comer the chance of favourable consideration, and indeed the defect that is most frequently urged against the Salon, especially by Englishmen, is that it includes, not excludes, too many pictures. There is something almost maddening in the apparently unending range of the galleries, as well as in the gigantic size and interminable number of the pictures which they contain, in view of the attempt to grasp within the compass of an ordinary visit—or even of many ordinary visits—the merit and meaning of so many works of art. Many folks, I fancy, leave the exhibition, wishing for the moment that there was no such thing as a picture or a statue in the world—satiated not so much with beauty as with the gigantic diverse endeavour of this heterogeneous army of artists.

From the dance of Herodias' daughter, to the interior of a Parisian hospital ; from vast historical compositions, to the interiors of butchers' shops ; from shipwrecks at sea, to half-dressed ballet-girls ; from Rameses II. to the last hero of Parisian journalism, the unfortunate spectator's mind and eyes are dragged, in his progress down the Salon, some 2500 times. Is it any wonder that long before he has seen a tithe of the exhibition his artistic palate is jaded and repelled ? Michelangelo, Titian, and Velasquez might appeal to him in vain long before he has come to M. Zwiller, whose picture, *Un Philosophe* (No. 2521), closes the list of paintings. And this, I fancy, is why so few English people are at all just in their estimate of the Salon, and why, also, we so frequently hear it spoken of with a passionate dislike, almost personal in its intensity. We English folks are accustomed to swallow a gallery, at a gulp, as we swallow our medicine, and to swallow this French exhibition whole is an impossibility. The pictures cannot be looked at under an appreciable amount of time, and it is even more difficult to pass without looking.

A collection of paintings where a work such as Mr. S. J. Solomon's *Samson and Delilah*, the largest picture of this year's Academy, would appear of but ordinary size, is apt to be very glaring in its imperfections ; and it must, at best, demand an amount of consideration and attention such as few people, who are not extremely interested in pictures, are ready to bestow. And these imperfections will be the more repellent, and this mental fatigue the more intense, in proportion as the painters of such pictures are less conventional, and are occupied in fresh artistic departures. We bear much with the men who are making history ; can we not bear a little with the men who are making painting ? We do not expect the perfect adaptation of means to end from the former ; why should we from the latter ? From those who are repeating dead formulæ, contented to follow the tracks of the men who have gone before them, much should indeed be expected, and for their errors little forbearance should be shown ; but to those who are seeking some new development in the sphere of beauty, some new means by which to express Nature, and facts which have hitherto been but imperfectly recognised in the domain of art, there should, I think, be every toleration given, for such men have the world against them as it is, and established fame, indifference, and conventionality are sure to deal them sufficiently hard blows ; and the least those who care for pictures and painting can do is to try to understand for what these eager students are seeking, and to give them what encouragement may be possible, if they seem to be seeking it in humility and earnestness. For the life of art, like that of all created things, depends on change. To cease to change is to cease to live ; and the art of one era can no more be wholly adopted by the people of another, than a method of thought or a fashion of its

behaviour. It is useless our protesting against the rising of the tide, or to sit, like pictorial Canutes, with our backs to the incoming waves ; and if the tendencies of modern art are to enlarge the sphere of subject, and to modify the technical methods and aims of the artist, all those who care to consider the matter seriously, must examine both the object, and the manner of the new departure, to see how far they can be reconciled with the finer qualities of ancient art, and whether they hold out reasonable promise for the art of the future.

The Salon affords a good opportunity for making this examination, as it contains examples of the most modern developments of painting, and I shall in the present article only mention such works as illustrate the changes which are gradually taking place. The chief difficulty of such an examination is to distinguish between what is merely a temporary development due to the fashion of the moment, and its effect upon the national character ; and what is the result of a permanent alteration induced by fuller knowledge, or necessitated by the requirements of a more elaborate form of civilisation. We must remember that a certain parochialism has always distinguished English art. It has, like the upper middle classes of our country, been considered estimable, but not of the highest social importance. We have always wanted to have pictures, especially of late years, but have desired to have them in a certain passionless, discreet, limited way ; desired to have them only so long as they did not interfere with our prejudices, or traverse our ideas of propriety. In fact, the question of price has always been present with us ; we have only been prepared to pay emotionally and intellectually a fixed amount for our art ; and, above all, we have restricted the sphere of subject and method of treatment, in the interests of conventionality. There is no doubt much to be said on either side of this question. The French, as a nation, have always been free from this coloured-glass style of art ; there has consequently seemed to most of our countrymen to be a certain violence, and, so to speak, nakedness of statement, about our neighbours' fiction and painting. We must not therefore be surprised if, in the Gallic pictures of the present day, which are the most in accordance with the ideas of the advanced school of painters, we find a choice of subjects such as at first sight appears to be even more abnormal, even more opposed to the reticences and conventions of English painting, than of old. For the great change which is coming over the feeling of artists, and is in one way or another modifying all they think and all they do, is a change in the direction of reality. They draw the subjects of their pictures more and more from the occurrences of everyday life, and admit into the manner of their representations less and less modification of the manner in which these occurrences took place.

There is no need to point out that, when once the above idea had

firmly taken root, it necessarily, or at all events probably, would pave the way for the almost indefinite extension of the picturesque. When subjects were not alone confined to those matters with regard to which our sentimental or sensuous emotions were connected, but embraced all matters relative to life which the painter could adequately depict, it was inevitable that many of the new pictures should appeal not so much to our sense of beauty, as to other emotions which had hitherto been considered to be beyond the province of art. Suppose that a band of artists had become convinced that beauty was dependent more upon the realisation of the natural aspect of things than upon the arrangement and modification of that aspect according to established tradition, they would be naturally likely to choose for the materials of their work, such subjects as the elder school would have considered entirely mistaken. They would seek out things trivial, things common, things in themselves even repulsive, and try to show how kindly the light of heaven fell upon them, and how they too had their fitting place in the great Palace of Art. We might expect, *à priori*, that they would act in this manner, and that the result would necessarily be in the first instance grotesque, and even objectionable to those who were brought up under the old rule ; and indeed it is to this cause we owe many of the pictures in the present Salon—pictures which deal with such conventionally unpictorial subjects as a bedside lecture in a hospital, the interior of a restaurant, even the contents of a butcher's shop.

I am not saying whether this new development be right or wrong. I am simply at the present moment engaged in stating the fact, and seeking to suggest the cause. It seems to me that the study of Nature, once admitted into poetry, fiction, or painting, necessarily must—I will not say end—but pass through, a phase in which the purely scientific aspect to a certain extent obscures the purely artistic intention. Wordsworth was the inevitable precursor of Zola, who is by the irony of fate probably the very last writer of whom Wordsworth or his admirers would have approved. And just as Wordsworth in his day threw off almost entirely the shackles of tradition, and sought from Nature herself the materials for his work, so the French naturalist painters, as they may appropriately be called, are, and have been for the last twenty years, getting rid of their traditional swaddling-clothes, and trying to walk about the world alone, and unaided by their old nurse—Conventionality. It is curious to note that this revolution, which has slowly accomplished itself, started—as did the revolution of English painting—in the department of landscape. The school of Corot, Millet, Rousseau, and Daubigny, which practically rules the whole of French landscape art of the present day, was firmly established long before the new school of figure-painters received recognition ; and indeed at the present hour the conventional characteristics of French figure-

painting are still in preponderance amongst the majority of the artists. That this is so arises from several causes. To begin with : the change to be effected was not so great, the way being prepared to a certain extent by the English landscape painters ; for in essential characteristics, Gainsborough, Bonington, Linnell, Constable, Cox, De Wint, and Turner, to a considerable extent inspired the work of Rousseau, Daubigny, etc. But in the line of figure-painting no such preparation had been made, and artists felt, so to speak, the sanction of the old masters, far more strongly. To paint a landscape, as it appeared, was bad enough, but to paint a figure, without regard to the manner of the *grand style*, seemed to the elder artists almost an impiety : besides which, to the outside public, accustomed always before-time to what might be called an artificial representation of figure subjects, the attempt to put them down in everyday prosaic manner, was far more alarming than if the picture merely treated of such a comparatively impersonal matter as natural scenery.

Like most other popular movements, the work of the new school ran into a thousand extravagances, and gave much occasion to its enemies to blaspheme. Not content with clinging to the new truths which they had caught sight of, they disdained all other means of support, and would accept nothing less from their adversaries than the entire remodelling of ancient practices, and a confession that the only saving grace was the one which had been so recently discovered. Not pausing to consider that in all probability the three or four thousand years of artistic example which the world had experienced, contained some kernel of what was right and requisite, they threw overboard, with light hearts, all the ancient equipage of art as mere useless lumber, and prepared to navigate their ship without compass or rudder—simply with the one bran-new sail of *atmospheric truth*. What wonder that the bark has been drifting on a somewhat erratic course ever since, and that no man knows whither it is bound, or whether it will ever reach its destination ? For, with Mark Twain's friend the negro, we may say of atmospheric truth, that though it may be our brother, it is not our father and mother and our uncle and our aunt, and our wife's relations down in the country. We are to disregard all the ideas of a subject, all desire for beautiful arrangement, all notions of composition, and simply accept as the one sufficient subject of a picture, a piece gouged out of Nature, as it were with a cheese-scoop, from the first place to which the artist came : this, or something very like it, is what our new artists would have us believe. It doesn't matter if they paint a picture of a crucifixion, or a dish of lights,¹ so long as they represent it *en plein air*. To an ordinary common-sense person the proposition will hardly seem worthy of refutation, nor indeed would many members

¹ There is actually a picture in the Salon of this subject, of the very largest life-size.

of the school dare to state it in so crude a form. This thesis is, however, implied, and is tacitly accepted, by a very considerable number of connoisseurs and picture-fanciers; and slowly but very surely this conception of art is making its way amongst our English artists, and so needs to be dealt with as a potent factor in contemporary art. It is the development of this proposition to the utmost extent which has given rise to the so-called *impressionist* school in France, and to its English modification.

These artists hold that truthfulness to the impression of any given scene is the utmost result which can be accomplished by a painter, and that therefore in this first imperfect vision, on the details of which the mind is not to be allowed to exert its influence, all the loveliness and poetry of art consist! To paint that which is impressed upon the retina within the space during which an eye can be rapidly opened and shut—this is the end to which the artist's effort should be directed; so alone can he obtain perfect truth, and in perfect truth alone can he find salvation. The theory, one may observe in passing, is a specious one, and very fascinating to young men who are eager for novelty. It makes every one as good as his neighbour—ay, and to use the old expression—a great deal better,—as it sweeps away at once all other criteria than the individual impression.

If a picture is not to be in the future considered good because of beautiful form, glow and depth of colour, dignity of aim, tenderness and poetry of meaning, or patient, industrious endeavour to depict every portion of its subject with completion and loveliness; but is to rely wholly upon accurately representing the effect of a cursory glance, and that at one thing or scene just as well as at another, it is evident that art will become at once a matter of very different import from that which it has always been considered in past times. For, we are tempted to ask, why should we want to decorate our houses with, and spend hours in looking at representations of what Tom, Dick, and Harry see as they wink their eyes rapidly? We can *wink our own eyes* if it comes to that, and at the things themselves, all day long, if we find the occupation sufficiently amusing. If the painter is to have no special vision, no subtle message, to exercise no power of selection or combination, to give us, in fact, no result but the reproduction of the quickest impression of Nature that we may all see in our *winking* moments, is there much use, for us at least, in his existing at all? When ordinary everyday people want to enjoy a scene in Nature, or to look at an interesting object or action, do they set to work to wink their eyes, or do they simply open them as wide as possible, and look out of them as hard as they can? But the *impression* is everything, say these young men! Why? And why one impression more than another? Why



LABORATORY OF COMPARATIVE ANATOMY. — E. GELHAY

E. Gelhay.

the incomplete vision rather than the completed one? Because, say they, the first impression is the only *visual* one—that is, the picture imprinted on the retina; and, consequently, that is the one you should reproduce. It will be evident to everybody that this is by no means logically sound, even if it be true that there is one actual moment at which the picture on the retina is visually true, unaffected by the operation and previous knowledge of the brain. But this contention is manifestly erroneous; we receive no impression, no matter how imperfect, without the assistance and the report on it, so to speak, of the brain; and there is no one point at which we can arrest this modification, or any at which we can say it begins.

The whole theory is based on a mistaken idea that the report of the eye, if I may use such an expression, can be dis severed from all our previous knowledge, from all mental experience; an idea which the slightest acquaintance with physiology would suffice to disprove. Even, however, as I have said, if it were correct, there would still remain to be proved the conclusion that because this first impression could be set down, that is the result to which the efforts of artists should be directed—which seems to me somewhat as if one should say that because the alphabet is the first step towards learning to read, we should prefer a jumble of letters to more highly developed literature.

But enough of this impressionist theory: it is one which will refute itself in time, and already it is losing its hold over the best of its followers.¹ The naturalist art of such men as Duran, Gervex, and others, which is the most prominent characteristic of the present Salon, is only but faintly allied to the ultra school of which I have been speaking, and it is this of which I must now speak.

The most popular picture in the Salon is by M. Gervex, and shows a clinical lecture by Dr. Pean in the ward of a hospital:

“En somme, l'harmonie noire des vêtements de nos jours est charmante dans les tonalités claires; elle peut varier à chaque œuvre de peintre, selon les milieux, l'heure, l'éclairage, et a au moins l'inappréciable avantage d'être constamment vue, et à portée des yeux de tous. A cet égard le tableau de M. Gervex est absolument remarquable. Il est impossible de donner mieux l'impression d'un jour d'intérieur, de cette atmosphère impalpable, éclairée par la fenêtre aux rideaux blancs relevés, modelant de reflets froids les visages, et circulant sur les murs nus de la salle d'hôpital. Ce qu'il y a d'air dans cette perspective restreinte, en somme est imaginable. On y

¹ These words have now been verified. Impressionism is dead amongst the French (advanced) school, and has naturally found its home in England: like last year's Paris bonnets.

pénètre, on y est, on y respire. Allons! l'art moderne a du bon. Avouez que la redingote n'est pas si redoutable et que M. Gervex est un peintre privilégié, d'une exquise sensibilité d'œil et d'une rare délicatesse de palette."

So far, M. Paul Mentz in praise of the modern art and this especial sample; and the merits which he finds therein are really there beyond all doubt: the *pure tones of the blacks*, the impression of indoor light, the bold reflections cast on the faces by the white hospital curtains, the sense of reality—all these are shown us by M. Gervex, not only adequately, but as it were *by authority*, so masterly is his rendering of the subject. And the list of admirable qualities is not exhausted even now, for the action and expressions of all concerned in this picture are as natural and lifelike as is the technical rendering of the atmosphere, light and shade, and colour. The Doctor Pean himself, whose demonstration forms the subject of the work, is a most admirable piece of character painting—his expression full of keen if somewhat pompous intelligence, and the little gesture with which he holds his instrument in one hand, while he explains its use, tells its story most admirably. What more, then, is wanting? Why should we not carry this work, too, through the streets of Paris, as Cimabue's Madonna was carried once through Florence in glad rejoicing? We may with advantage consider this question a little closely, for on the answer thereto depends the future of painting, and indeed, not of painting only, but of all the arts.

Let us get back, if we can, to the most elementary view of the matter. Art evidently cannot be good unless it be good for *something*, unless we get from it some result not to be obtained otherwise. It must be surely in the highest development of its special characteristics that the best kind of art will be found; whether these be or be not conjoined with the qualities of other developments of human energy will be comparatively unimportant. At all events, let art first of all give us that which she alone possesses; afterwards we will accept from her hands every other good gift. What is, then, the vital quality of art? What do we first want from pictures? Why do we desire to have them at all? Think a little! Is it because of the wonderful workmanship of the painter—simply to admire his dexterity, as we would that of a Japanese juggler? Is it only as records of things which are or have been—coloured diagrams of life, from which we ask nothing but accuracy and plainness of statement? When we hang pictures upon the walls of our rooms, do we do so only as so many columns from a pictorial dictionary, so much information that when the barometer was low, and the sun at a given altitude, such and such an object cast a shadow of a certain value, colour, and shape? If this be our

reason for wanting pictures, art is surely a very tame Board-school sort of matter. If the vital characteristic of art is only, that its record is shaped in form, and expressed by the help of light and shade and colour, instead of being written in ordinary characters, the world has been making far too great a fuss over painting and sculpture for the last three thousand years. The world is too full of learning which life is too short to comprehend, for folks in general to hang their houses with long statements as to the appearances of all things, even though those statements are bounded by the four sides of a frame, instead of by the covers of a book.

Then, if it be not true that this scientific record is the object and the characteristic of art, what do we seek therein which we could not obtain elsewhere? The answer is very simple: not fact, not learning; but—delight. We seek at once that double gratification of sense and spirit, of what we see and know, and of what we feel and dream. The power of art over mankind lies in this appeal to both sides of man's nature; to those emotions within him which are gratified by beautiful forms and colours, exactly in the same way as the body is gratified by being plunged into a warm bath, and to those thoughts, dreams, indefinite and half-shaped spiritual perceptions, which make up the life within us. And the power of the great artist is, that he can trace this life of beauty, and its connection with our life of thought and action, through channels whose source and windings are invisible to our duller eyes. By his exquisiteness of perception, no less spiritual than physical, he can endue the gesture of a tired child with a *significance* as well as *grace* of which we know nothing, and reveal to us, beneath the roughest exteriors, that throbbing pulse of beauty, which beats for ever through all natural things, and all true development of human emotion. But to do this he must feel as well as know; he is not the surgeon, but rather the Sister of Mercy of mankind, and tends his patient not only with skill, but with tenderness and prayer. And since the artist is to interpret beauty to us, to find it in out-of-the-way places of humanity and Nature in which we should pass it by, above all things must he be eager in his search, and very human in his emotions. Perhaps no very good picture which the world has produced was cold in its emotional aspect; no amount of technical skill in the least atones for lack of feeling.

These considerations prevent me caring greatly for M. Gervex's picture, and they seem to me applicable to much of the modern French painting, which is at once profoundly skilful, and as profoundly heartless. Gallic—and I am sorry to say some English—artists have of late years grown so absorbed in their pursuit of

technical excellence as to have forgotten that painting, after all, is but a means to an end, not the end itself; and, as in the old days, the gods have granted them their heart's desire, and therewith has come the accompanying retribution. The power, the skill, and the industry shown in this present exhibition of the Salon are simply incredible in their extent; and despite them all, the visitor to the gallery goes away fatigued and depressed, conscious of a multitude of paintings of consummate ability, and scarcely remembering half-a-dozen beautiful pictures.

There is at the École des Beaux Arts at the present time a small collection of works by a dead painter (Jean François Millet), which in extent would, if all of them were put together, not cover half the space of canvas of many a single picture in the Salon; yet I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that, regarded from the point of view of art, the Millet collection (chiefly of pastels, charcoal, chalk, and pencil drawings) is worth a hundred exhibitions such as the Salon.¹ In it we find a man not only seeing beauty in ordinary things, but endowing that beauty with new meaning and new pathos, without altering the truth of its appearance. To be at the same time simply veracious in statement, and pathetic and beautiful in the works in which these statements are made, is about the highest praise which can be bestowed upon an artist, and this praise is Millet's most certain due. The Breton peasant-painter did thoroughly for the real life of the French rustic, a very similar work to that which Walker and Mason did for the imaginary life of the English countryman—touched it, that is, to fine issues of poetry and pathos; made it at once significant, pictorial, and true.

The comparison between these artists tells immensely in favour of the French painter. He was not only a simpler, truer soul, in himself, but he drew his inspiration of beauty from a purer, deeper source. Examine Fred Walker's peasants and labourers, and one finds them beautiful indeed, in both form and gesture; but the grace which they have is not the special grace that belongs to them in life, but that which the artist attributes to them from his genius, and, as it were, in their own despite. Take as an example one of the grandest compositions which this artist ever painted, *Speed the Plough*, and notice the actions of the only two figures therein—the man driving the plough through the furrow, and the boy guiding the horses. The actions of both are magnificent, and might have been copied from a vase of the finest period of Grecian art; but only the slightest acquaintance with country life is needed to inform us how little like the actual operation of ploughing—how essentially (not untrue, but) uncharacteristic are these poses. The same words

¹ The *Angelus* by this painter has since been sold for £30,000—and in Paris!

apply to the splendid gesture of the labourer removing the pipe from his mouth in *The Old Gate*, and to that of the mower in *The Harbour of Refuge*. These figures are all beautiful in action, but beautiful despite the characteristics of country labourers, rather than because of them. But if we turn to a shepherd or a shepherdess by Millet, we find a very different manner of obtaining the result of loveliness. The artist clings tenaciously to every indication of the effect of labour and exposure—clings to the rough, shapeless garments, the slow paces, the exhaustion, the endurance, the isolation, and, I might almost say, the terror, of life in the fields and the woods; and it is by realising for us these facts, by bringing them into accordance with the dew of the morning and the gloom of the twilight, with the shifting seasons and the inconstant sky, that he gains the material for his poem. Occasionally, it is true, as in *The Sower*, and again in a lesser degree in the *Two Men Digging*, we have a free unconstrained action, but only where such is of the very heart of the subject. It would be correct to say of Fred Walker that he *made* country life beautiful, and of Millet that he *found* it to be so; that Walker's was a townsman's country, and Millet's that of a son of the soil. However this may be, the collection at the École des Beaux Arts of the latter artist's work, emphasises the defect of such painting as that of Gervex and his imitators. If in these flat fields and toil-worn people, engaged in shearing sheep or cutting faggots, planting potatoes or breaking stones, there resides such an intimate secret of loveliness that a few scratches of charcoal on a bit of paper, representing them, give us so much delight, must there not be something *very wrong indeed* with this elaborate, highly-trained, elaborately-wrought-out, gigantic-scaled work of the Salon, which, with all its pounds of paint and acres of canvas, awakens no emotion within us but that of wonder at the apparently causeless industry of its producers? There is something very wrong; and, at the risk of wearying my readers, I repeat that it is the substitution of technical skill for the old end of painting and sculpture, which was to express and to excite emotion: to give delight by painting matters in which the artist delighted, things which he believed, loved, felt to be true.

What was the secret of Millet's success against every opposition, against lifelong poverty and total want of education. It was that he understood and cared for the things he depicted; saw their meaning and their connection with life. Do you doubt it? Here are his own words:

"I must confess, even if you think me a Socialist, that the human side of art is what touches me most, and if I could only do what I like—or, at least, attempt it—I should do nothing that was not

an impression from Nature, either in landscape or figures. The gay side never shows itself to me. I don't know where it is. I have never seen it. The gayest thing I know is the calm, the silence, which is so sweet, either in the forest or in the cultivated land—whether the land be good for culture or not. You will admit that it is always very dreamy, and a sad dream, though often very delicious.¹

“You are sitting under a tree, enjoying all the comfort and quiet of which you are capable; you see come from a narrow path a poor creature loaded with faggots. The unexpected and always surprising way in which this figure strikes you, instantly reminds you of the common and melancholy lot of humanity—weariness. It is always like the impression of La Fontaine's *Woodcutter* in the fable :

“ ‘What pleasure has he had since the day of his birth;
Who so poor as he in the whole wide earth?’ ”

“Sometimes, in places where the land is sterile, you see figures hoeing and digging. From time to time one raises himself and straightens his back, as they call it, wiping his forehead with the back of his hand. ‘Thou shalt eat thy bread in the sweat of thy brow.’ Is this the gay, jovial work some people would have us believe in? But, nevertheless, to me it is true humanity and great poetry!”

I have lingered perhaps over-long in this contrast of Millet's work and the naturalistic compositions of the present time, but this artist forms a link between the old and new schools, and, with the landscapists allied to him, inaugurated the revolution which has determined the chief direction of modern French Art. Yet these men, who saw poems in unaltered Nature, and produced them in colour and form, have opened the way for the men who see no poems, nor feel any regret at their absence, but prosecute their art with a cold accuracy of endeavour, substituting the solution of problems for the delineation of beautiful things!

Meanwhile it must be confessed that, if we grant the desirability of their aim, the industry and ability of the artists of this school are almost beyond praise. Not to speak of the work of such masters as Gervex and Brouillet, there are men such as Girardot, Raffaelli, Duez, Dantan, and many others, producing pictures which, for truth of out and indoor light and effects of atmosphere, are unsurpassable. Girardot's great picture in the present exhibition, of *Ruth and Boaz*, is a composition of this kind, which, though almost repellent at the

¹ Finding this quotation in Sensier's *Life of Millet* gave me, I own, the keenest pleasure. This is the theory of the power and right use of art, in which I have always believed and tried to teach. To find it shared by one of the greatest artists of modern times was indeed good!



DANS LES BOIS. — J. DE SOUZA-PINTO

first glance, becomes most technically admirable when closely examined, from the truth of effect and the evidently desperate struggle of the painter to get the strongest possible rendering of the fact he had selected. The subject here (Ruth and Boaz) might be Jack and Jill as far as the interest of the picture is concerned, which depicts simply the effect of a bright moonlight without and within a dark farm-shed, in which Ruth and Boaz sit resting. Without and within—that is the keynote of the artist's idea; the flood of light, soft, brilliant, and tremulous, breaking in through the open door of the shed, and bringing into relief portions of the seated figures, and then gradually fading away into darkness amid the beams and wood-stacks and farm implements. A really marvellous piece of work this, in its daring, and the success of its main attempt; nor is it without a certain vague poetry, which seems to show that M. Girardot might also have made the picture delightful from the point of view of subject, if he had not been too busy with his special problem to care about so doing.

It is hopeless to speak at any useful length of the general landscape work which we find in the Salon; it is beyond all comparison finer than our English work in the same department, whether we regard it from the point of view of style, of truth, or of technical accomplishment. Our English Academy has to the best of its ability killed the landscape art of England, by neglecting the men who studied that branch, and by electing to its ranks only the more superficial landscape painters of the Scotch school. But the Scotch school of landscape is not only a school without poetry and depth of meaning—a school of half-a-dozen effects of mist and sunshine, which it repeats without variation from year to year: it is also, and beyond all else, a school without *style*—with no connection with any of the great qualities of bygone art, and which has substituted nothing for that defect. Such painters as Harpignies, Duez, Rapin, Nozal, Vernier, Laurens, Flandrin, Penet, Hanoteau, and perhaps above all (if only for his beauty of colour) Le Roux, have no rivals at the present time in English art. They are simply miles and miles beyond us, not only in their technical skill, but in the scale of their impressions. They see the scene as a whole, not in detached bits; they see the scene as it is, not as it prettily might be; they see the scene too with a certain dignity, a certain quality of style very difficult to describe, but which continually saves their work from being merely a sort of natural history painting, as it for the most part restrains them from weakening their pictures with the flabby parochial sentimentality of which our own artists are so fond. Take the green depths of the forest as painted here by Pelouse¹ (one of the very greatest land-

¹ I know it is the fashion in Paris to laugh at this old master, but—fashion passes, and good work remains.

scapists living), and notice how entirely convinced the artist appears to have been that in the slender stems of his trees, the quivering light that falls on trunk and leaf, the thick moss which covers the stones of the little brook—that in all these things there was quite enough interest, not to say beauty, to justify his great picture. And there is enough as he has painted them; he has touched them all with a general, if not a particular sentiment; we seem, on looking at the picture, to lose sight of the special wood, and only remember the stillness, the shadow, the broken light, the peace and fragrance which we have known in similar scenes. Call it abstract quality or style, or by whatever name you will, this characteristic of French landscape is one which enhances its merit very greatly—at all events to the present writer. It takes the picture from the category of mere reproduction, and brings it into perceptible relation with the great art of the past, and if it does not suggest the poetical or pathetic charm of the relation of Nature to man, which is probably the highest development of which landscape painting is capable, it does succeed in treating the multitudinous facts, in obedience to a definite intention. Why should a human being with brains and a soul, as well as eyes, simply go out into the first field or hedgerow, and stick his spade into Nature, and, bringing home the result triumphantly, call it a landscape picture? Not pictures at all are nine out of ten of modern English landscapes: studies for pictures they frequently are, but rarely more: they are bits taken here, there, or anywhere, without relation, combination, or object.

Let any one who doubts the above fact examine carefully the pictures at the Royal Academy, and he will find that there is only one real landscape in the present exhibition, and that is by a man over sixty years old (Mr. Hook, R.A.), who belongs to the last generation. To depict a patch of light on a hillside, the transparency of a wave, the glow of a sunset, is a worthy and desirable object for an artist; but the result is not a *picture*, but a *study*. And as folks ought to know, but as our English painters will ignore, a picture is made up of many studies affected by a special purpose. It is the recognition of this purpose by the spectator which removes the work from the purely reproductiveness of a study, to the artistic rank of a picture. It is the knowledge that a human intelligence, as well as a skilful human hand, has been at work on the materials of Nature, subduing them to settled predetermined ends, using (not abusing) them for a definite purpose. This is the human element in landscape painting, and it is in proportion as this intelligence is elevated and in sympathy with our deepest feelings, that landscape pictures gain in beauty.

One cause no doubt of this superiority of French landscape, of which I have been speaking, is the superior thoroughness of their

artistic education, and the habit of working on a large scale. I have no space to dwell on the details of these facts—they are well enough known to need but little comment; but I cannot leave this subject without pointing out, especially to English students, how humiliating this Salon exhibition is to us in the extraordinary industry and pluck which the young artists display. Knowing what I do of the straits to which many of them are reduced, and of the difficulties of every kind which attend the production of a large picture, there is something splendid in watching these young men, who generally are far poorer, and live far more economically than English painters, spend their last dollar upon a huge canvas—twenty feet square or so, and hurl thirty or forty life-size figures thereon—with as great a determination as if they had the Bank of England at their back, and the reputation of Michelangelo.

No doubt their works are crude, exaggerated, most defective in various ways—often insolent, sometimes brutal. “But,” as Tom Thurnall would have said, “these painters are *men* at least”; they are alive with pulses throbbing in obedience to a vigorous humanity; there is about them none of the whine, the fine-finger affectation, the sickly morbid fear of spoiling their genius by bringing its results before the world, to which many of us Englishmen are prone. I like to think of these shabby-coated young fellows, in their garrets of the Latin quarter, standing before huge *Death of Cæsar*, *Triumph of Joan of Arc*, or *Apotheosis of Victor Hugo*, or whatever be the subject of their picture, plastering on their great pounds of unpaid-for paint, with cheerful confidence, and dining afterwards, midst a great deal of noise, and practical jokes, and thick clouds of cigarette smoke, at a twenty-sous restaurant. They are types of the race who shove the world along in their profession; they *mean business*, to use an expressive slang phrase, and they have their reward: the fierce competition for the prizes, the watchful eye of the Government always to put *Commandé par l’État* upon any unusually good ambitious attempt by an unknown painter, the habit of tackling subjects of tremendous difficulty, and, well or badly, *pulling them through*—all this keeps them up to the mark, till their business is learnt, and their reputation, if it may be, assured. It is no use for English artists or critics to minimise these facts; no use for us to bestow an easy sneer at the horrible subjects, and the vast sizes of these Salon pictures. The subjects are frequently horrible, it is true; but why? Because they are wholly unconventional; because they cover, or attempt to cover, the whole ground of human interest. We who go on repeating from year to year our Vicars of Wakefield, our Georgian costumes, our pictures of Scotch moor and Cornish coast, our silver birch tree or shining waves, are safe enough from such a condemnation; but the safety is on the whole inglorious. The material

of our artists is, I believe, as fine as that of any nation, but their training—in narrowness and blindness, in absence of all encouragement and all guidance—is contemptible, and unworthy of a great nation.

The Government and the Academy between them might remedy this state of things in no small degree, but it will never be really altered till there grows up amongst our people themselves, a less pettifogging, less parochial view of art; till our countrymen cease to place Mrs. Grundy in the seat of judgment on their books and their pictures, and allow to the arts the freedom on which alone they can really flourish. Pictures are, after all, but experiences of life, and life is not constructed with a view to the axioms of the copybooks, or the cheek of the *young person*.



Imp. Daubou et Lesieur, Paris

A SUMMER NIGHT

ALBERT MOORE

From a platinotype

I.—ART AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY—TRADITIONS AND CHANGES, 1872-1890.



THE first portion of the following essay (1872-1882) was originally written in Rome, where I was then studying sculpture in Signor Spelta's studio in the spring of 1883, and without books of reference other than the catalogues of the Royal Academy Exhibition, which I was fortunate enough to be able to borrow from an old artist friend. This may perhaps explain if it does not excuse the omission of many pictures which certainly deserved notice, but which had passed away from my remembrance, or so nearly passed as to preclude their criticism. The introductory remarks I leave as written. The second portion (1882-1890) is mainly composed of revised extracts from my *Spectator* articles.

But it seems to me that there is a great need in England just now of Art writing which can be definitely traced to its first principles. Believing that the power and beauty of Art are intimately connected with its relation to life, and to the great passions, desires, sufferings, and joys of humanity, I have tried for some years to show how such a belief may be substantiated. The question of how far this relationship is inextricably entwined with the beauty of the form in which it is expressed is, perhaps, the greatest *crux* in art, and sometimes one sees very splendid art in which the relationship is almost invisible. But if sought for sincerely, it is, as far as my experience goes, always there. A beautiful thing—statue, picture, or building—may always be traced back to its connection with the great facts of life; remove it utterly therefrom, and its true beauty fails. Boucher's cherubs are pretty, not beautiful—Raphael's are beautiful, not pretty; the one altogether unakin to life, the others simply children touched with some divine influence. The one man in England who might have

seen this truth and made others see it, and recognises all its significance, is Mr. Ruskin; but, and I say it with the profoundest reverence for his genius, and gratitude for the work he has done, he has been led away by the necessity (the fancied necessity) of tracing a special moral and religious principle throughout. What Mr. Herbert Spencer calls the *theological bias* is evident in most of his reasonings on this subject, and, where that enters, like any other bias, the judgment is vitiated. For art is limited to no creed, any more than beauty is limited to one country, or one race. Wherever men and women live and love, and suffer and enjoy, there art, too, can live, and will do so, not only in accordance with their virtues, but with their failings—perhaps, even with their crimes. This is the truth that Ruskin resists. He refuses the name of art to work in which the morality appears to him to be false or even wanting. Such at least is the tendency of his writing. He forgets those wise words of the old circus-master in Dickens' *Hard Times*, "Folks can't allus be a thinkin', 'thquire, nor yet allus a learnin'; folks must be amuthed; make the best of us, 'thquire, and not the worst."

All true art is a true expression of life, and life is very complex, very faulty, and often very base. The relation does not cease because the artist chooses to represent that which is a defect rather than a glory of humanity; nor because he is himself erring. We may blame his choice from a moral point of view, we may even banish his pictures as we do Rousseau's *Confessions*, or Gauthier's great love-story, but don't let us stultify our reason and our judgment by saying that the art itself must be bad, because its motive is imperfect. The world is not made better by perfect means: mixed motives produce all the good we know. What we do want in art is that it should never lose its grip upon life, upon the great facts of nature, feeling, and thought with which we are all concerned. All else is *nihil ad rem*, useful for a moment's pleasure, but alien to everything that helps on the day.

Certain things in the world are beautiful in outside form or inner meaning; certain others become so through their connection with their surroundings or with alien facts, or by their appeal to true human interests—within this range (is it not a sufficiently large one?) lies the field of true art; concerned to gather and bind into a whole the scattered threads of beauty and interest which lie unheeded about the world. And such as is the quality of the mind and heart of the artist, so must be in the main his art. He may confuse our perception of his ignorance by the dexterity of his hand, and use his knowledge of technique to conceal the emptiness of his heart, but he can never touch us with his skill, save when he has previously been touched himself, can never make us feel where he has not previously felt. One wanders through the French Salon,

and is amazed at the power, dexterity, or technical excellence of the great mass of the pictures, and wonders why the effect of the whole should be so unutterably wearying and depressing — should leave so little impression. Is it not because the artists are painting to show us what they can do, rather than tell us what they feel ?

Those who think that art is a great mystery, of which only its high priests hold the key, who fancy that a painting can be great for some inscrutable, unexplainable reason, lose sight of the fact, that if this were so, half the real power of art would be gone. Pictures are only great when they express with deeper perception or intenser feeling than that of the majority—some fact of thought or emotion which is true in its relation to life. It need not be a noble one—for all men are not noble, nor all emotions worthy. Veronese's devotion to Splendour produced as true, though not as exquisite, an art as Titian's devotion to the beauty of the human form ; and Rubens' coarseness and vulgarity of nature did not prevent his art possessing the beauty of strength and imaginative freedom.

Previous to the last twenty years, our traditions were in the main derived from the Dutch rather than the Italian schools. For this there were many reasons—the prevalence of Dutch influence on the nation, the comparative propinquity of the country, the greater similarity between the character of the inhabitants of Holland and England, the solid technical excellence of the Dutch painting—and many others. For whatever cause, the majority of English figure paintings were founded upon the principles of the Dutch and Flemish schools, and aimed rather at solidity of workmanship, and careful attention to *chiaroscuro*, than at vivid imagination, splendour of design, or brilliancy of colouring. The school was not a great one, but was safe, and on the technical side sound. It had, moreover, a certain simplicity which was in harmony with the English character. A little stupid, a little dull, and perhaps a little brutal (think, for instance, of Wilkie's *Village Festival*), it was sincere, sturdy, and national. Not unlike the novels of Sir Walter Scott, in honesty of purpose, freedom from morbid feeling or minute analysis. The danger of the style as a national one was the foundation upon excellence of technique, rather than upon natural fact—for the Dutch work owed its greatness not only to technique, but to what George Eliot with her usual insight calls "the rare, precious quality of truthfulness in these Dutch paintings."

And when the English schools first followed in the track of the elder masters, they too clung a little to this precious quality. Look at the earlier figure pictures of this century, and much of their charm will be found to reside in their truth. The main principle of the Dutch

schools, which is the sacrifice of colour in shadow, for the sake of relative brilliancy in light, is too technical a one to speak of here. Still, it must be noticed, that the adoption of this principle produced the sham Rembrandt kind of *chiaroscuro* of which we have had in England so many examples.

But the great defect of the Dutch school, the exaltation of technique into a sufficient motive for a picture, irrespective of its subject, soon began to obtain in England, and before the decade of which I have to speak, the Academy traditions had entirely lost sight of all but the technical excellence and completion of brushwork in Dutch painting, to which they still clung firmly—as a sailor to the last morsel of wreck. Dim feelings were no doubt stirring in the Academic mind as to whether something was not rotten in the state of Denmark, even before Mr. Ruskin wrote *Modern Painters*, and the young pre-Raphaelites stirred the muddy waters with so vigorous a hand, and at any rate from that time—say from 1850 to 1872—the symptoms of the coming change were evident.

And when the pre-Raphaelite idea was once fairly grasped, the death knell of the old *régime* sounded. Now, the pre-Raphaelite idea was partly at all events an Italian one; the Academy tradition was, as I have said, Dutch, and between these, from 1850 to 1872, there was fought a good fight, none the less real because silent, and never clearly proclaimed; for not only, or indeed chiefly, the pre-Raphaelites themselves were affected by this movement, but it stirred the blood of antagonists as well as sympathisers, and those who least agreed with the so-called pre-Raphaelite¹ manner, adopted to a very considerable extent the idea of which that manner was but the crude expression. Those, too, who disdained the earlier Italian masters, began to study in defiance the later painters of the same school, and to imagine that the traditions of Titian and Tintoretto might have as much to recommend them as those of Rembrandt, Teniers, and Ostade. No wonder that those who adhered to the old traditions felt the ground to be slipping away from under their feet, and despairingly endeavoured to effect a compromise between the old and the new, between Holland and Italy, between prose and poetry. No longer a *Village Festival*, or a *Crossing the Brook*, or *Choosing the Wedding Gown*, etc. etc., formed the subject of the painting, but a sentimental scene from *Pamela* or *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a semi-imaginative historical episode, or some dream of classical legend, or religious history.

The leaven, however, was too real to be resisted; the truth, or, at all events a hint of the truth, had got abroad and was beginning to be recognised. The painters, whose predecessors had been conven-

¹ See the Essay on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

tional in their treatment, but sincere and simple in their feelings, had been succeeded by a generation who were equally conventional, but far less sincere, and who, in deference to the supposed wish of the time, endeavoured to supply the place of truth with sentiment, and beauty with picturesqueness. Though these latter had formed for the twenty years we have mentioned, and the twenty preceding, the bulk of the Academy—their hour was come, and their fall and that of their theories is already matter of history. But in their stead, and side by side with their last efforts, there sprang up, what? Well, such a war of opposing creeds and theories as, perhaps, was never before seen. On the one hand the pre-Raphaelites, real and imitation, on the other the Scotch Impressionists; here, echoes from the "*Beaux Arts*," there, fresh dry traditions from Munich or Düsseldorf. Realists on the one hand, idealists on the other, and everywhere of course conventionalists, treading despondently yet safely in their habitual road. Every one doing what is right in his own eyes and wrong in his neighbour's; not a single principle generally admitted, not a single practice in common.

The old days of contented dulness were over for ever, the days of unrest, and diversity of aim and method had arrived. The last trace of the old order of things faded with the death of Sir Francis Grant, and the election of Sir Frederick Leighton in his stead; but we are still no nearer to an artistic creed than we were before. Out of the divine forty who constitute the *Royal Academicians*, it would be hopeless to extract any agreement as to either the aims or the methods of the art they practice; to parody Tennyson—

"They do but draw because they must,
And paint but as the linnets sing."

The majority, indeed, would probably deny that any principle or any aim in common was possible. As one of them once said to me, apropos of his own work—"Meaning in a picture! I hate the word; who wants any meaning in a picture? There's no meaning in my pictures!" I remember humbly suggesting that possibly people in general preferred one, but I was laughed to scorn.

However, to return to our subject. For much of the hopeless diversity of aim amongst our painters Mr. Ruskin is in one way responsible, for he headed the revolt from tradition to nature, and many of those who either adopted or were influenced by his teaching, have stuck fast in the clutches of a dull realism which is as far removed from great landscape art as if it were the most conventional of methods. The race of English landscapists which during the first half of the present century seemed to promise such great things has died out; we have no one living in this branch of art who

is equal to Turner, Linnell, David Cox, De Wint, or even Samuel Palmer, most limited and most delightful of painters. Indeed, we can hardly be said to have a living landscapist at all. The most sincere landscape artists living are Mr. Hook, Mr. Alfred Hunt, Mr. Albert Goodwin, Mr. Thomas Collier, and Mr. Aumonier.¹ Of these Mr. Hook is more of a sea and seaside painter than a landscapist in the usual sense of the word, and is besides one of the elder generation who has almost ceased to paint. Mr. Collier and Mr. Aumonier, both chiefly known as water-colour painters, carry on worthily the tradition of Cox and Linnell. In my review of the 1877 Exhibition, I have spoken more at length of the various kinds of landscape art ; it is sufficient to say here that much of its deficiency arises, doubtless, from the peculiar temper of the present day. Confidence in elder theories is gone, and nothing as yet has taken its place but a study of nature, which will no doubt bear fruit in time, but its season is not as yet.

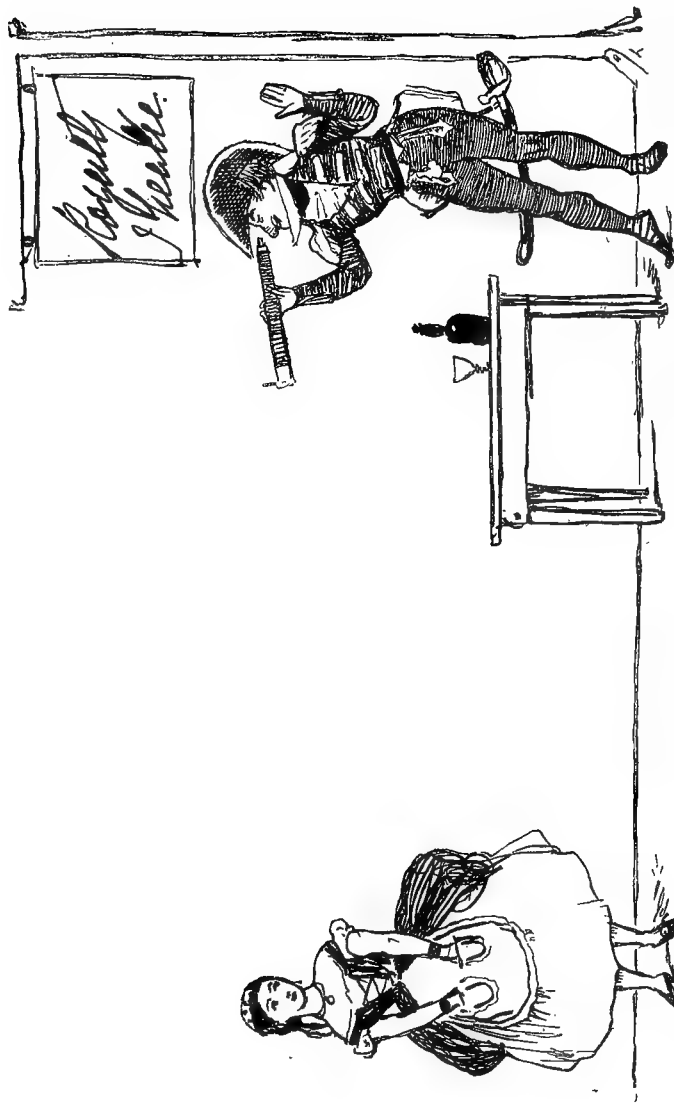
The look-out in the direction of figure-painting is still more depressing. The English figure-pictures in the Academy of late years have with scarcely an exception been either cheap, sentimental scenes of everyday life, costume compositions of little merit and less interest, or echoes, more or less indistinct, from the schools of France, Antwerp, or Munich. Here and there an artist like Mr. Watts or Mr. Poynter is struggling to do serious work in a worthy manner, but the exception is rare, and a strange foreign element is working its way amongst us, and giving an air of boulevard and casino to much of what should be our best painting.²

One thing is evident, the simplicity of English painting is gone for ever ; we must now go through the same mill as our continental neighbours, and if we are to have a great art in the future, it will have to be founded upon a wider basis than of old. The fashion of the day has had much to do with this. An artist is no longer a simple workman doing his work for rational pleasure and honest pay. He has of late been erected into a little Society god ; he lives in a palace, and is courted by the world, the Society papers (which have done so much to ruin English social life) chronicle his doings and applaud his eccentricities, and so he becomes a hot-house plant and lacks vitality. He knows more, but he feels less. He is cultivated rather than sensitive, instructed rather than wise. And, being a patron of Society, he must perforce comply with its conventions of many kinds, and loses his old sincerity of purpose.

Outspokenness is very rude now in pictures, as well as at flower-shows ; and with this new life there has come for the artist the

¹ Mr. Hine (the elder), Mr. Alfred Parsons, and, at his best, Mr. Wimperis should be added to the above list of painters, of whom *one only* (Mr. Hook) *is a member of the Academy!*

² Let me remind readers once more that this essay was written in the spring of 1883.



M. Threl
Seaside, Ind.

Chas. B. Neward
1867

Envelope designed for the burlesque of Black-Eyed Susan
FRED. WALKER A. R. A.

necessity of increased expenditure, and therefore increased gains ; and so he, like all the rest of us, gets scrambling for the mighty dollar, and paints not what he likes best or believes in most, but that of which the public will buy most. The fashion for art, of which we hear so much praise, has, nevertheless, nearly destroyed our painters.

And there are many other causes which I must not dwell on here—the decay of religious belief, the decadence of national morality, the growing tendency to copy the worst fashions of our Continental neighbours, and to despise the insularity of feeling of which we were once so proud ; all of these militate in some measure against the growth of any great national school of painting. The Universality of Sir Frederick Leighton, on the one hand, is as distracting as the eclecticism of Mr. Ruskin on the other ; and, while the former will admire a cocotte, a contadina, or a countess with equal ardour, the other will look at nothing but an English Girl by an English Painter : the truth, however, is more nearly with the last than with the first mentioned of these.

It must be *ourselves by ourselves* which shall form the foundation of our future art. Englishmen painted by Bavarians, Americans, or Belgians, will never have a truly national life ; and foreigners painted by ourselves are equally hybrid, whether they are ancient Greeks or modern Parisians. There are a few great traditions which are the property, not of a nation, but the whole world, and in these all painters, poets, and musicians have an equal share, but for the rest we are what God made us and shall be, and our painters must make what they can out of the rude material. After all there has been a good deal of *stuff* in the nation in former days, perhaps even traces of the old divine fire may linger yet if they are sought for.

The truth is best, however unpalatable, and the truth is that there is no very great art in England just now. Much art there is of exquisite merit in its minor way, and some of which is imperfectly striving after the highest qualities. But of art serenely accomplishing work which will live, there is little or none. The perfection of Sir Frederick Leighton's technique will not save his dainty-skinned damsels from the oblivion that awaits them ; they will not die, for they have never lived, but they will cease to charm. The portraits of Mr. Watts approach most nearly to the dignity and suggestiveness of great painting, and they have occasionally qualities of colour such as entitle them to rank with the highest. But they are imperfectly realised, and far too unequal to form a type of excellence ; the painter has never entirely mastered his method, or rather he has never had a method that was not an experimental one.¹

Probably the most vital of contemporary English art, is that of Mr.

¹ But see the paper on Watts.

Burne-Jones, and Mr. Holman Hunt, the representative pre-Raphaelite, but this is so totally distinct from all Academy traditions, that it is not to be considered here;¹ and it is, besides, one in which the strength and the weakness are so curiously intermingled, that it seems doubtful whether its merits could ever exist without its characteristic defects. It expresses the unrest, the soft regret for lost beauty of life, the sense of transitoriness and futility, which are so deeply impressed upon most of our best modern poetry and thought; in a healthier time, its appeal to us would be less powerful. His painting is classic to our failures, but not to our joys.

And here, before I pass to the notes upon each special Academy exhibition, I would say a word in remembrance of one great artistic genius of our day, who was not a member of the Academy, and who, throughout his life, was neglected and misunderstood. This was Alfred Stevens the sculptor, an artist who, with the capacity for being the greatest man of his day, was occupied by our discriminating English public during the chief part of his life in designing decorative stoves and ornamental chimney-pieces. The one great work of his life, the Wellington Memorial, is to be seen huddled away in a corner of St. Paul's, and, lacking the statue of the soldier which was to have crowned the monument—very literally Hamlet, with the character of the Prince of Denmark left out. It is amusing at the same time that it is pathetic, to know that the wise authorities who so deal with the greatest piece of sculpture of our time, and who refuse to expend the £5000 or so necessary to complete the artist's design, are going, at the present time, to expend, perhaps, twenty times that sum, in covering the interior of the dome with sham mosaics, which, in all human probability, will not be able to be seen when they are constructed. It is a strange piece of the irony of fate, that the President, and one of the chief Academicians, have been called in to complete with their designs this scheme, the architectural skeleton of which was originally designed by Stevens himself.² However, I must not linger over this question, but, leaving generalities here, speak of the exhibitions in detail, beginning with that of 1872.

1872 This exhibition was remarkable for possessing the two best pictures of that idyllic school which Mason and Walker may almost be said to have founded in England. *The Harvest Moon*, by the first, and the *Harbour of Refuge*, by the second of these artists, were then both exhibited for the first time, and mark the highest point to which either artist attained.

¹ Of course Mr. Burne-Jones has since been elected an Associate, but that does not render his art Academic. Indeed, he has only exhibited once since his election, and has, I am told, announced his intention never to exhibit again!

² The Academy never recognised Alfred Stevens as a sculptor, but preferred Mr. Weekes and Mr. Woolner. Now, nine years after the above words were written, Sir Frederick Leighton has discovered that the Wellington Memorial would look better if it were to stand in the nave, and a subscription is being raised for the purpose!

There is also a certain similarity between them of subject, style, and method of thought ; and, though both are marked by an exquisite sense of colour, there is also to be found in them a quality of design which is more akin to the art of sculpture than painting. Or which, perhaps, it would be more rightly said, is only to be found in those painters whose sympathies are allied rather to the Greek than to the Italian schools. This was the case with both artists. Mason, during his two years' residence in Italy, had imbibed much of the spirit of classic art, and in Walker the grace of action and propriety of gesture of ancient sculpture, were visible from the very first. The paintings were yet very different in their main effect, and showed clearly the distinction of character between their respective artists. *The Harvest Moon*, a long low picture with many figures of reapers and their sweethearts going home after the day's work, had scarcely more affinity with facts, than an idyll by Theocritus has with the everyday life of the peasant. One felt irresistibly on looking at it, that the work was justified by its beauty ; but that this thing was not, and never could be, true. Not false, for it was too frankly unpretentious to reality ; and not futile, for it had that exquisiteness of beauty which sanctions art, if it does not morality ; its appeal to the spectator was purely unconnected with the reality of the story that was told. In Arcadia, such labourers and girls might have moved thus slowly homeward to the sound of their pipes and violins ; but not in England, not in Italy, not in any land that we see, save in dreams.

The *Harbour of Refuge*, on the other hand, relied for its power upon truth alone. It was a picture of some red alms-houses flushed with sunset light, a few figures of the old inhabitants dotted about under the trees, or in the gravelled walks ; and in the foreground a grass plot half covered with daisies, which a mower was swiftly reaping. The chief figures of the picture were those of the mower, and two women who were coming slowly down the long walk towards him. Moral we can hardly say the composition had, or was meant to have ; but it was full of delicate hints of meaning. The young woman in the pride of life and beauty, supporting, with somewhat disdainful ease, the steps of her aged companion ; the free, careless, toil of the mower, indifferent alike to the beauty of the daisies beneath, and the sunset above ; the unalterable patience and self-concentration of age ; all of these were there, expressed with grand impartiality, and framed and suffused with a beauty that greatly enforced their meaning. A most true, exquisite, and pathetic picture, missing, perhaps, the perfect dreamy loveliness of balanced form and tender grace, to be found in *The Harvest Moon*, and just shadowed with a gloomy feeling of weariness and futility, but secure in just appeal to the facts of life and death, and to that unheeded beauty of Nature which surrounds us all. In the sense of great art there was nothing

to compare with these, and it is worth noting that a melancholy interest attaches to them of being almost the last works of their authors. Mason never exhibited at the Academy again, and died (if I remember rightly) in the following year. Walker sent one small picture in 1875, *The Right of Way*, and died the same autumn. About that time died also George Pinwell; and so within three years perished the three English painters who stood alone in their power of combining figures and landscape.

The next painter whose work was memorable in this year was John Lewis. *The Prayer of Faith shall heal the Sick* was one of those Eastern scenes of which this artist painted so many, and represented the interior of a house with an old priest reading the Koran, and grouped round him the women of the family. Though technically of great perfection, it was a large and somewhat uninteresting picture, as Mr. Lewis' compositions of many figures were wont to be, for this artist was singularly incapable of seizing the dramatic meaning of a scene, and was at his best in subjects where his marvellous powers of execution could be concentrated upon details of dress, flowers, or architecture. Emotion worried him, his work required absolute calm, unflinching certainty, and inexhaustible patience. How inexhaustible that patience was could be seen in the second picture, *The Lilium Auratum*. In it there are only two figures, a young Persian lady and her maid, and the scene is at the door of the house, behind which we catch a glimpse of an orange grove and a patch of bright blue sky. The girl has been to pick a bouquet of roses, etc., for her lover, and the maid-servant is standing behind her, laughing at her sentimentality. Such, at least, seems to be the meaning, but it is of little importance. The really valuable part of the work is the work itself, the absolute putting on of the paint. A good deal is said, just now, about delicacy of execution, but here is execution of which the delicacy is scarcely conceivable. The chief effect, in fact, produced upon a painter by the picture, is amazement, not only at its delicacy, but at the prodigality of labour which has been bestowed thereon. The figures are surrounded by flowers of various kinds—are clothed with elaborate robes of many colours, each covered with elaborate design, and there is very literally not a square inch of the work into which minute and unsparing labour has not been poured almost wantonly. Execution such as this is akin to genius in its rarity, and akin to it too in the pleasure which it gives, though the pleasure is, of course, not that of creative work, but depends on the perfect realisation of things which may be trivial or uninteresting in themselves. In truth a Missal painting art, and admirable more for the loving skill and patience of its workman, than in itself.

Mr. Frank Holl's *I am the Resurrection and the Life* might well



POOR JACK
SKETCH BY PHIL. MORRIS. A. R. A.

be placed as a counterpoise to Mr. Lewis' brilliancy, but in its way was equally sincere. A dark funeral-picture, with mourning figures gathered round an open grave, under the greyest of skies. Could we have a greater contrast than this to Persian sunshine, trailing robes of crimson and gold, and a maiden gathering roses for her lover? This was one of the finest of those delineations of the mournful side of life by which Mr. Holl made his reputation, and should be ranked with his earlier composition of *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*, to which it was perhaps intended to be a companion. Mr. Holl set a difficult problem to his admirers in those days, and one that was tolerably new to the English public. English painting had aforetime been confined to pleasant things; or, at all events, if it touched tragedy, had done so in a frank Shakespearian manner, meant to be interesting, or exciting, but scarcely heartrending. But here was a painter who deliberately set himself to harrow our feelings, and who was no doubt successful in so doing. Anything more dreary and more depressing than the two pictures above-mentioned is not to be found in the whole range of art, ancient or modern: even Israel himself, who carries joylessness to the pitch of mania, is more frank and therefore more bearable in his want and woe than Mr. Holl, and hides in the merciful darkness of his cottage interiors, hints of peace and comfort.¹ Yet these were genuine, and in one sense, almost great pictures; they struck a note in modern art which may possibly rise to be the dominant one. The traditions of the schools are passing away; the costume art is dying fast, and it is pictures like these which devote unsparing power to the facts of everyday life that are hastening the change. It is perhaps inevitable that the most picturesque elements in modern life should be those which are connected with the sorrowful emotions, or perhaps it is only the reaction from the days of pleasant futilities which makes such work acceptable.

Mr. Holl has now deserted his former style, and become almost entirely a portrait painter—the finest portrait painter we have, with the exception of Watts and Millais—but the scent of the roses cling to him still! and often in the delineation of a decent father of a family, a grave senator, or a reverend dean, there flashes out a little of that dark tragical feeling which marked his earlier painting. Like Hamlet, his mourning livery lies deeper than his outward garb, and probably he could not, if he would, paint a picture which had not some trace of desolation in its beauty.²

Mr. Cecil Lawson, the young landscape painter who died so suddenly last year, had a small picture called *A Lament* in this

¹ The feeling of these works by Mr. Holl is probably due to the study of modern French art. They have a shadow of "Montmartre" cast upon English daisies.

² See the Essay on Frank Holl.

exhibition commemorating the establishment of the works for the making of the Chelsea Embankment. It was slight, a little affected in its abnegation of colour, and little likely to be noticed, but it had that truth to atmospheric effect which the painter subsequently developed, and a certain quality of style difficult to describe, but probably due to the study of the older schools of landscape. For years after this Mr. Lawson exhibited at the Academy, having his work almost invariably hung where it could not be seen, or rejected altogether. And it was not till Sir Coutts Lindsay gave it the place of honour at the Grosvenor Gallery¹ that most people even knew of the existence of this painter. It is a grave reproach to the Academy hanging committees and councils of selection, that they should have shown either such ignorance or such indifference as was betokened by this neglect. And it does not make their action the more tolerable that in after years they hung Mr. Lawson's pictures upon the *line*, and just before he died elected him an Associate.

The two most popular landscapes of this year were Sir John Millais' *Flowing to the River* and *Flowing to the Sea*. Both, as the name denotes, river scenes, both large in size and realistic in treatment; both full of skilful painting and carefully-studied detail, and both unsatisfactory to the painter's most sincere admirers. The preceding year had brought the *Chill October* (practically the painter's first landscape) and seen its marvellous success. Sir John Millais was undoubtedly then, as he is probably still, the most generally popular painter in England, and the public delight in his taking a new departure and making such a success therein, was unmistakable. I confess that, after seeing the *Chill October* several times during the dozen years that have elapsed since its exhibition, I think its merits were overrated. It does not seem to possess the merits of a great landscape, but to be simply a piece of keen observation of Nature, presented with great clearness. As a picture the composition is somewhat insipid. One is tempted to turn away and ask why this dull sky, and cold water, and shivering reeds should have been painted so well.

And this feeling is equally inevitable with the two succeeding pictures. They do not miss their point, but they have none—they offend our sense of selection, and style, and all that we are accustomed to find in great landscape work, and they do not give us in exchange even the pre-Raphaelite beauty of each individual stick or stone, wave, bough, or cloud. A coarse realism pervades them, realism which has little relation to fondness for the thing painted, and which is only redeemed from worthlessness by its technical excellence.²

¹ About four years ago.

² For those who remember how lovingly Mr. Millais painted inanimate nature in such pictures as the *Ophelia*, *The Huguenot*, and the *Autumn Leaves*, will not confound these later landscapes with true pre-Raphaelite work.

The truth is a very simple one, albeit most visitors to the Academy did not and do not see it. A landscape is not to be painted casually by a figure-painter, just because he can reproduce a little bit of Nature. It takes more than that to make a great landscape picture. There are only two kinds of great landscapes; the one depends on the painter's power of animating a scene with some human interest or emotion, till he makes it akin to humanity, and the other depends on the painter's power of selection and composition; on the power, that is, of so arranging his subject as to create in the mind of the beholder an impression of its sufficient beauty, dignity, and interest. Broadly speaking these may be called the modern and ancient schools, and within their boundaries falls all really great landscape painting. But Sir John Millais' art has no kinship with either of these, he is essentially a figure-painter, and there could be no more terribly significant sign of the utter absence of all critical perception in English art judgment, than that his landscapes should have been hailed with such joyous acclamation. That there are beautiful bits of work in them, and that they have considerable superficial truth to nature may be readily conceded, but they have little meaning, dignity, or interest; they show no perception of the finer beauties of nature, and they must be considered simply as studies of everyday natural effect. As such they are far inferior to the work of Mr. Brett, of whose painting more anon.¹

In the same exhibition Millais had some fine portraits, including the celebrated picture of the three Miss Armstrongs, entitled, *Hearts are Trumps*, but the best portrait in the Academy was *Mr. Calderon*, by Mr. Watts. It was a life-size head, painted on a plain and very dark background, without accessories of any kind. Mr. Calderon's face, with its traces of Spanish and Jewish origin, its handsome features, and its somewhat stern expression, formed doubtless a splendid subject, and one peculiarly suitable to Mr. Watts' tastes, but even so the portrait is a very remarkable one, full of concentrated power and dignity, and singularly successful in its beauty of colour. The character of Mr. Watts' finest portraits is, indeed, unrivalled in contemporary art; they have no relations nearer than Reynolds. In some ways they are finer even than Reynolds'; for they go deeper into the character of their sitters. In England there are at present only these three first-rate portrait painters, Watts, Millais, and Holl,² and each has a method of his own. Watts ponders his sitter, and tries to express him fully, sometimes with too great an

¹ I should dearly like to alter this last sentence. It is most entirely mistaken; but this paper is inserted to show what I thought in 1883 and not in 1892. So it must stand.

² I fear that all readers of this pamphlet will be unanimous in thinking that I should have included "Oules" in this list, but it has always seemed to me that his work, earnest, solid, and life-like as it is, lacks all essentially fine artistic qualities. A portrait painter who is not sympathetic is an impossibility, and, to my mind, Mr. Oules' work is absolutely deficient in this quality.

indifference to superficial characteristics. Millais gives us a splendid outside splendidly painted; keenly observed glittering with life, vigour, and brilliancy. Holl drives his sitter into some corner, and then flashes a dark lantern upon him, and paints him sternly, strongly, and, if I may use the expression, implacably. All are fine workmen—Millais is incomparably the finest—but only one is a great portrait painter; it is only in Mr. Watts' likenesses that we find that depth of insight which renders portraiture interesting, even when the name of sitter and artist have alike faded. There was another portrait here which must be noticed, as it represented the only work of the artist which was exhibited at the Royal Academy. This was the likeness of *Mrs. Whistler* by her son. It was called an arrangement in grey and black, and it excited considerable attention at the time by the vigour and the peculiarities of its method. Mr. Whistler has since then become a tolerably well-known figure in artistic circles, and his works have found a home in the Grosvenor Gallery, where their merits can be adequately appreciated. I was unwilling at this time, for private reasons, to express any critical opinions upon Mr. Whistler's work. I have since ceased to feel that his numerous personal attacks upon me in the *World* form any reason for silence, and I therefore may insert here that when I saw this portrait again some years later, I considered it of great beauty and originality.

There was little else in this exhibition which calls for special notice. Sir Frederick (then Mr.) Leighton had no important work, Sir Edwin Landseer was showing signs of age and failing power. Mr. Briton Riviere's *Daniel*, though well drawn and dignified, was wanting in life, and the figure of the prophet was tame, and the whole picture far inferior to the *Circe*, to which it was a companion. Mr. Poole's diploma work was hardly a favourable specimen of his imaginative graceful art, and Mr. Marks' *Waiting for the Procession* less successfully humorous than usual. Messrs. Redgrave, Pickersgill, Horsley, Cope, Hart, and Charles Landseer were neither better nor worse than usual, and Messrs. Faed and Nicol painted their peasants, sad or merry, in their wonted manner. Mr. Alfred Hunt, Mr. Brett, Mr. Peter Graham, were all painting good landscapes or seascapes, and Mr. H. Moore was painting the sea itself, with increasing power, but a dulness of colouring which took away much of the beauty of his work. Mr. Albert Moore, who had exhibited two of the most exquisite of his designs the preceding year, had nothing in the exhibition, and Mr. Poynter had the *Perseus and Andromeda*, one of the four large pictures painted for the Earl of Wharncliffe's billiard-room. On the whole, the exhibition was a representative one, but had only two pictures that deserved to be called memorable—*The Harvest Moon*, and the *Harbour of Refuge*.¹

¹ And perhaps Frank Holl's *I am the Resurrection and the Life*.—1892.



SIR WILLIAM BOWMAN, OCULIST

W. W. OULESS. R. A.

From a photograph

1873

The most notable event of this year's exhibition was the first of those seashore compositions by Mr. Brett, which subsequently became one of the yearly features of the Academy. Having been one of those who vainly urged the right of Mr. Brett to academic honours for years before the Academy tardily elected him an associate, I may perhaps be pardoned for pointing out that this artist has since produced no work of finer quality than this picture of wave, and sand, and seaweed covered rock which he called *Amongst the Boulders*.¹ If, as seems to be the case, the present doctrine of the Academy is that landscape art is to be no more than a realistic copy of Nature, here was a picture to which the highest honour was due on the spot; for, in truth, realism pure and simple could go no farther. After ten years' interval the painting of rock, and sand, and water herein, remains in my memory as clearly as when first noticed, and I seem still to see the bright sunshine, the blue waves, and the glistening of the sand round the half-buried rocks.

Perhaps an exception to the doctrine of landscape painting laid down in the last chapter may be made in favour of those who can light up our walls with sunshine such as Mr. Brett's; for there lurks within it a joy of its own which almost dispenses with other meaning. However, we may note that Mr. Brett went on painting and exhibiting analogous works to this year by year, and was elected a member of the Academy about eight years subsequently.

Mr. Leslie's *Fountain*—some girls in classical draperies grouped round an ancient fountain, with a background of leaves very carefully painted—was another of the pleasant pictures of the year, but one in which the painter's peculiarly delicate powers scarcely showed to advantage; for Mr. Leslie has little in common with Greek art, except the simplicity and directness of his intention, and these are best seen in his painting of national subjects. The *School Revisited*, which he sent two years later, shows him at his best, giving a simple grace of his own to a commonplace, almost trivial, incident, and finding a way to make youth and innocence beautiful, without endowing them with artificial beauty or sweetness.

His work is an anachronism truly, and smacks of our forefathers, and knows nothing of board schools and electric telegraphs, being indeed almost too exclusive in purity of atmosphere. But the artist shows Englishwomen and children such as we like to fancy they may have been in the days when George the Third was king.

It was this year that Sir Frederick Leighton exhibited the small

¹ And since 1883 none so good.—1892.

coloured oil sketch for the fresco of the *Industrial Arts of Peace* in the South Kensington Museum. The design was fine, though it showed traces of that German influence which occasionally appears in the President's work. There was a companion sketch to this of the *Industrial Arts of War*, the fresco of which has been lately finished.¹ Not at all inspired work, but refined, cultivated, and skilful in the highest degree.

Look for a contrast to this at Sir John Millais' young lady picking the *Newlaid Eggs* out of the nest—one of the sweetest, freshest, and prettiest of all his girl pictures—and one sees in a moment the difference between a man who is born, and a man who has learnt, to paint. Here we have Sir John Millais at his best, as in the same gallery we have him, perhaps, at his worst in the over-dressed, over-laboured, and over-coloured likeness of Mrs. Bischoffsheim. Mr. A. Moore sent this year a largish picture (badly hung, if I remember right), called *Follow my Leader*—a bevy of girls in the thinnest classical draperies, playing at the old-fashioned game, amongst grey tree trunks in a daisied meadow.

This is, perhaps, scarcely to be thought of as an oil painting, so deficient is it in depth and luminosity² of colour, so slight is its texture, so little of solidity does it possess; but regarded as a decorative panel the composition bears comparison with anything of its kind. For the painting is absolutely right in apparent ease of execution, freedom and grace of movement, lovely lines combined with the greatest and apparently the most unconscious science, simplicity of effect, and in the general air of unrestrained enjoyment which pervades the whole. A pleasant picture, pleasantly painted, with a thoroughly Greek feeling in the girls' easy movement of body and limb, their happy unconsciousness of aught but the joy of living, while faces are fair, and skies blue. I have said that some minor things in art were being now done better than they ever had been done before. One of these is the painting of thin draperies by Mr. Albert Moore. To the best of my belief no painter, past or present, has grasped the beauty and the character of such robes with anything like the success which this artist habitually attains. Practically, he has given his life to this subject, and he has succeeded in making it his own.

¹ This is in a lunette in one of the Galleries of South Kensington Museum; the other will face it, but it is not yet begun. There is too great a preponderance of purple and white in the finished painting for the work to be thoroughly successful, and apparently the President has found himself somewhat cramped by the medium employed (Gambier Parry's), but both designs are remarkable for their splendid figure drawing and for considerable beauty of line.

² I dislike using this word, which is so continually in the mouths of the newspaper critics, but I know no other which will express without paraphrase that quality, as of a cut-open precious stone, which all really great colour really possesses. Flat tints are one thing, colour another.

Mr. Marks comes naturally after Mr. Albert Moore, if only because of the utter contrast—as perfect a one as could be conceived between two painters, both of whom work more for a decorative than any other purpose.¹ Both are fine craftsmen, and there all similarity ends. Mr. Marks' painting (take *The Ornithologist*, *The Page of Rabelais*, or any other of his humorous works, as an example) is solid, good work, very unobtrusive in its method, and perhaps a little flat and monotonous in its execution. And if the painting is skilful and industrious throughout, so is the drawing in a somewhat rigid mechanical manner. The subjects of his picture are originally treated, and their points are struck clearly and sharply. A burgess or a serving-maid by Mr. Marks is just a little different to all other burgesses or serving-maids. But in all essentials of art, as Mr. Moore sees art, these works are wanting. For beauty of any kind is absolutely unthought of within their limits. Strange, quaint, humorous, satirical and amusing, Mr. Marks is frequently ; interesting always—beautiful never. It is work which is far too good for its motive, its attraction would be equally great in a woodcut to a weekly paper—it is, in a word, wasted art—the art of the gargoyle *out* of its niche, useless and fruitless.

The miserable state of artistic ignorance amongst our cultivated classes may be gauged by the fact that this modern form of Gothic humour is what is supposed to be most suitable for decorative purposes, and that the public, in fact, have probably employed this artist to paint more friezes, and make more designs for glass and decorative panels, than any painter in England. The truth being, that of all conceivable styles of painting in the world, this is essentially the least decorative. I cannot stop here to discuss the subject, but any one who cares to think of what qualities are desirable in decorative work, will find that those are exactly the qualities which are lacking in this style of art. And in speaking of the Academy, and estimating its effect for good or evil upon English art, it is well to remember this instance : that the Academicians select to form one of their body, the Gothic painter, and despise the Greek ; that is to say, they, being artists, deliberately prefer the art which is based upon grotesquerie,² to that which is based upon beauty. As I shall not have occasion to mention Mr. Marks' painting again, it is desirable to note here that his most serious, and, on the whole, most admirable picture, was the one entitled *St. Francis preaching to the Birds*, exhibited previously to the years of which I am writing, and after this the *Capital and Labour* (1874), which showed the

¹ This is hardly an accurate expression. Mr. Marks has, probably, done more work of a decorative than any other character, but his oil paintings in the Academy are decorative only in a secondary degree. Their main motive is not to make a space beautiful, but to tell a story amusingly.

² I don't know whether there is such a word as this, but if not there ought to be.

humorous side of a dispute between a mediæval employer and his workmen.

A word or two must be said here about Mr. H. W. B. Davis—a peculiarly industrious and clever workman—who was elected an Associate in this year. His pictures were always carefully composed and painted, full of pleasant effects of cloud and sunshine, and generally made up of green trees, and grass, and a few rough-coated cattle. Cows and oxen he drew especially well; and it was probably to this that he owed his election; for he was always more of an animal painter than a genuine landscapist. The peculiarity about his early painting was its excessive want of geniality—if I may use such a word. His pictures were like a schoolmaster's joke, irreproachable, but a trifle heavy. Partly his colouring was responsible for this impression, but probably it was mainly due to a somewhat precise habit of mind, which calculated, or seemed to calculate, too nicely all its pictorial effects. One felt before his pictures that it was ungrateful not to like them better, when one admired them so much. Since his election, Mr. Davis has improved greatly, and may now be considered the first of our cattle painters; but something of the old unsympathetic quality still lingers, and he seems never to have quite made up his mind as to what he seeks in Art.

The strength of this year's collection did not lie in the figure pictures, but in the general high quality of the land and seascapes. The Hook's, the Brett's, the Henry Moore's, the Alfred Hunt's, the Davis', and the Leader's were all fine and numerous, and made up the average of what would otherwise have been a very indifferent exhibition. The two vacancies in the list of Associates, left by the death of Mason, and the promotion of Mr. Dobson, were filled by Messrs. Davis and Hodgson, of whom the latter was a good draughtsman and a careful, somewhat old-fashioned painter, chiefly of domestic incident in Eastern life. He is a clever, somewhat dull artist, addicted to semi-farcical subjects, but treating them with a heavy hand, and one who has since scarcely justified his election. There was, however, at this time, and for some years subsequently, a great bias in the Academic mind towards domestic painters of an absolutely colourless and unobjectionable character, and Mr. Hodgson's pictures had considerable merit of a technical kind.

1874 'Seventy-four was an eventful year at the Academy, if only because it comprised Mr. Alma-Tadema's *Picture Gallery*, Mr. Millais' *North-West Passage*, *Scotch Firs*, and *Winter Fuel*, Mr. Fildes' *Casuals*, and Miss Thompson's *Roll Call*. The last of these was certainly in popular estimation the picture of the year. Fortunately it is too well known

to need description. How much the intrinsic merit of the picture had to do with success, would be hard to say, but certainly in a snobbish land like ours, no amount of intrinsic merit would have produced half the excitement about a work of art that the few words of the Prince of Wales produced about this picture. Now that that excitement has faded, I may perhaps be allowed to say, without failing in courtesy, that it appears to have been greatly overstrained. The picture was a cleverly conceived, and carefully painted one, of a sentimental type. It was remarkable for resolute adherence to truth in so far as the artist could discover or imagine what the truth had been, but had no great qualities of colour or design,¹ and touched no feeling other than a sentimental one. The subject, which was bound to attract sympathy from every Englishman, was represented in at once a popular and possible way. Its sentiment was contained in the facts. For power it could not compare with the picture of *Quatre Bras*, which the same lady painted the next year, and in which, taking a subject of infinitely greater difficulty, she succeeded even more strikingly than before.

Mr. Tadema's *Picture Gallery* is one of his largest, if not his best paintings, and represents the interior of a Roman picture-house, with a connoisseur showing the works to his friends. In execution inferior to none of his later pictures, and in realisation of the scene scarcely to be surpassed. How far the skill of the execution, and the accuracy of the research which are here displayed, atone for the artistic purposelessness, is a difficult question. There is something essentially futile in the endeavour to render with elaborate realistic detail the minutiae of ancient life—the labour, even if successful, must be so infinitely out of proportion to the worth of the result.² What is gained after all by this marvellous painting of objects collected, invented, or discovered by the research of the artist? As I sit here writing in the Forum, at the foot of all that is left of the Temple of Saturn, it seems as if the chipped bits of drapery round me everywhere, are worth all the details of Mr. Tadema put together, and that they tell more truth about Rome than could ever be got out of his work. However, this is no place to argue such a subject, and if I do not give greater space to this artist it is because he is not an English painter in any right sense of the word.

Mr. Millais' *North-West Passage* and his two landscapes of this year, show almost the last trace of his early pre-Raphaelite proclivities.

¹ In fact, the composition was singularly ugly. Nor had the artist any real knowledge of what she painted. This picture was sentimentally true, but had not the unmistakable look of having been done from nature.

² From an art point of view such pictures have only great value if they are to be considered as pictorial school-books, but to this Mr. Tadema would hardly consent.

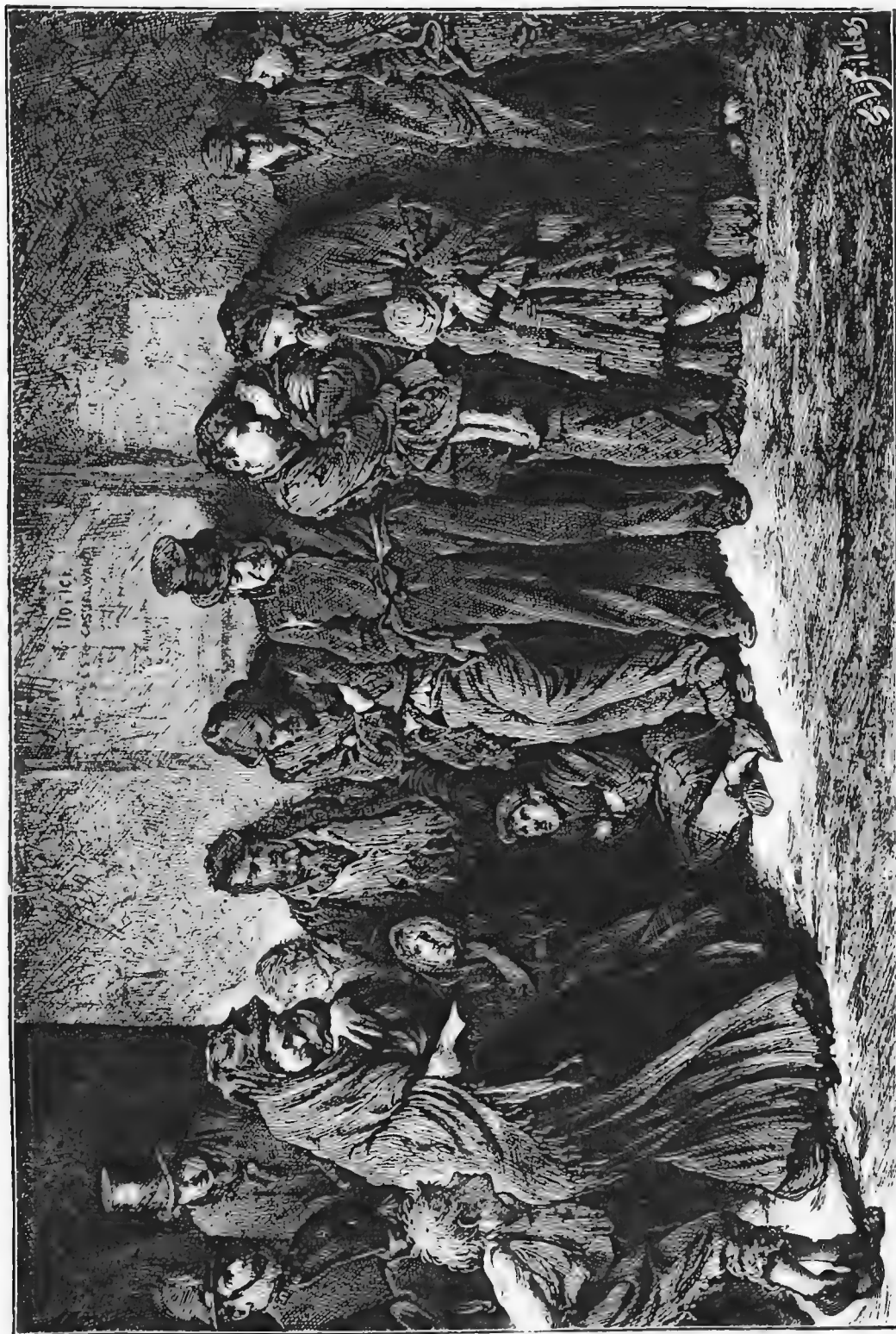
Neither of the landscapes has quite the old directness or charm, but there are portions which remind one of the painter of the *Ophelia* and the *Vale of Rest*. In spite of a little dressed-up look and a suspicion of theatrical pose, the picture of the old sailor showing the track of his ship on the chart to the girl who kneels by his side, is a beautiful one, tenderly thought out and strongly painted. It may be said to form the last of that series of subject pictures which built up the painter's reputation.¹ The *Scotch Firs* and the *Winter Fuel* are also remarkable for the minuteness of their execution, and for bits of colour put on to bark, bough, and foliage, with something of the frankness of earlier times. Indeed, Mr. Millais never had such a triumphant exhibition as that of this year. From this point he began to decline—to decline at any rate in the fascination of his work, for his technical skill is, when he chooses to exert it, as great as ever.

There were two idyllic pictures of modern life in that exhibition which deserve a word of mention, though little notice of them was taken at the time. These were *Le Chaudronnier*, by M. Alphonse Legros,² and *Phyllis on the New-mown Hay*, by Mr. Robert Macbeth. No two pictures could be more dissimilar in their representation of rural life. The Frenchman's is cold, grey, gloomy, and almost cruel in its unsparing truth. The Englishman's is cheerful, pretty, and bright, and full of pleasant suggestions of waning sunlight and quiet enjoyment. One is the life of the poor as Millet, the other as Walker, painted it. Both were fine, *Le Chaudronnier* strong in its truth and dignity of treatment, *Phyllis* strong in its resolute adherence to the sunny side of youth and nature, and in its frankness of conception. Mr. Macbeth's *Phyllis* is only a country lass after all, but she is bonnie and young, and has that largeness of mould to which Mr. Macbeth has gradually accustomed the visitor to the Academy. I remember when the critics grumbled hugely at the proportions of his peasants, and objected to their strong arms and thick ankles; but all that is over now that he can write the magic initial after his name.³ M. Legros is a painter who may be said to be exceptionally unfortunate. He can do certain things well, but he cannot render anything pleasant, and even the good qualities of his art are apt to be stern and unbending. He is in some ways a magnificent draughtsman, but it is in a hard, severe style—such as is scarcely appreciated out of France—and he has little sympathy with any but the more desolate aspects of Nature. The finest works he has produced here have been his etchings, one of which, a supremely desolate one, entitled *La Mort d'un Vagabond*, is almost terrible in its tragedy. As a remembrance

¹ For I omit the *Crown of Love* exhibited subsequently, that love story in which, as Mr. Ruskin tersely said, the lady had a head without a body and the gentleman a body without a head.

² Since Slade Professor at University College, London.

³ He was elected Associate three months ago.



THE CASUALS
LUKE FILDES R.A.

that there are pleasant things in the world, Mr. Albert Moore's *Shells*, a damsel wandering along the seashore with wind-blown hair and garments, came as a good antitype to M. Legros, and Mr. Marks' *Page of Rabelais* was also welcome. Perhaps this last is the most perfect of all Mr. Marks' smaller pictures. Mr. Watts' portrait of Martineau, Mr. Pettie's *Juliet and Friar Lawrence*, and Mr. Orchardson's *Ophelia* and *Hamlet and the King*, and Mr. Poynter's *Rhodope*, were all in this exhibition, which was, on the whole, an unusually interesting one.

But most famous of all was the *Casual Ward*, by Mr. Luke Fildes, talked of within a month all over England as *The Casuals*. This picture of the squalid crowd waiting at the workhouse door is too well known to need description, but it is worth while to point out that its power resided entirely in its appeal to a vital fact of life. Mr. Fildes is a good, not a great painter, but he here hit upon a subject which is perhaps the most significant of all subjects for Englishmen at the present time. He painted it with absolute truth, and a considerable amount of dramatic insight, and his success was perfectly genuine and unmistakable.

1875 This was probably the best exhibition of the decade, not only as representative of the Academicians and Associates, but in having several pictures of worth by outside artists. *The Babylonian Marriage Market*, by Mr. Long; *The Last Muster*, by Mr. Herkomer; *The Bearers of the Burden*, by Mr. Boughton; *The Spires and Steeples of the Channel Islands*, by Mr. Brett; *The Quatre Bras*, by Miss Thompson; and *The Charge of Cuirassiers at Waterloo*, by M. Philippoteau, were all paintings of indisputable merit, and might well remain to this day as first-rate examples of their respective artists; whilst within the Academic circle there were to be found, the finest portrait Sir John Millais ever painted (Miss Eveleen Tennant); *The Slinger* of Sir Frederick Leighton; the grand design dedicated *To all the Churches*, of Mr. Watts; *The School Re-visited* of Mr. Leslie; the *Rachel* of Mr. Goodall, and *The Samphire Gatherer* of Mr. Hook; while the sculpture gallery possessed what, if we may trust Mr. Ruskin, was the most precious work of the exhibition, the life-size statue of Carlyle, by Mr. Boehm.

And first, of the four painters who have since been elected Associates, and who probably owe their election in no small measure to the pictures sent to this exhibition. Mr. Herkomer's *Last Muster* was a large oil painting, the design for which had previously appeared as a double-page illustration to the *Graphic*, as an illustrator to which paper the artist was at this period chiefly known. It was a study of Chelsea pensioners attending service in their chapel. It was hardly to be

regarded as an oil painting in the sense in which *painting* is correctly spoken of, but was a piece of strong, unaffected, and direct work applied to a worthy subject. Amongst much sham and sickly sentiment the composition stood out in sincerity, and showed a certain manly sympathy with its subject, neither overstrained nor sentimental. In fact, to use an artistic phrase, this was a *big thing* not concocted in the studio. Since then Mr. Herkomer has risen rapidly in reputation, but he has done no better work, and little which is as good. He has always been far too busy to learn to paint, and except that his penetration into character is so keen, and his industry so untiring, his work would almost warrant the name of insolent. The huge landscapes, for instance, which he exhibits at the Academy or the Grosvenor are scarcely more than dexterous scene painting.

Mr. Long's *Babylonian Marriage Market* was a work in which the merit was of a totally different kind to that of the last-mentioned picture. This showed great industry, and a power of combining the various results of untiring research into a consistent whole. The subject was a happy one as far as popularity goes, admitting of the introduction of many gradations of womanly beauty, and with an amount of dramatic interest rare in these elaborate reproductions of ancient life. The picture had, however, the defects which are apparent in all Mr. Long's work, a want of freshness and ease, and a certain lack of artistic feeling. Despite the good painting and the composition it bore the same relation to fine art, that Southey's epics do to fine poetry. In fact multiplicity of detail is not fine art, though the fact is apt to be overlooked in paintings which take us back four thousand years or so, and realise for us all the details of ancient life.

Great paintings are not alone skilful handling of the brush and pencil, and introduction of suitable surroundings. For a great picture must either tell us old things in a newer and more perfect way, or must tell us new things of which we feel the beauty and the truth. The great artist either sees more deeply or more widely than the rest of us. But this is what Mr. Long does not do: his art is all on the surface, a thing of *shreds and patches*. What matter that they are cut from ancient and precious tissues. To see what he lacks, we must compare his paintings with similar compositions by M. Gérôme. There is no unity, no spontaneity, no artistic fire about his work, like there is in that of the great French artist. And it is strange to note that Gérôme, whose manner is probably more cold and less sympathetic than that of any living painter (except M. Legros), has the power of giving to his scenes of ancient days an amount of reality and meaning such as Mr. Long, with all his elaborate machinery, entirely lacks. The truth is that the one gives us the surface aspect of his subject, the other penetrates into its essence. Mr. Long's

Assyrian maidens, or Christian converts, or Roman soldiers, are merely correctly dressed dummies, using appropriate gestures ; but M. Gérôme's Arab, who sits by his dying horse in the desert, is a real character ; we feel that we know him and his grief and love, almost as we know an old friend. Let the English artist have all the merit to which he is entitled for his careful painting, his picturesque arrangement, his unquestionable ability of realising the superficial aspect of a dead civilisation, and the industry and accuracy with which he has collected and displayed his facts.¹ But telling us *many things* is not equivalent to telling us *much*, and the picture's merit does not depend upon the amount of its artistic patience and research.

As usual, in artistic matters, the truth lies in an exactly opposite direction to the popular impression. The only excuse for these grim historical, semi-archæological works is, that the artist should feel that he must paint them, and should justify that feeling by showing in his work the effect of his prepossession. Then the ancient life lives again in the modern artist's sympathy, and through that sympathy affects all who see. This is, of course, the gift of genius, and we may sufficiently say of Mr. Long's work, that such a gift is the last one with which he could be credited.

Miss Thompson's *Quatre Bras* has already been alluded to, and *The Spires and Steeples of the Channel Islands* by Mr. John Brett must pass with the remark, that the picture showed all the power of his brilliant realistic painting. Probably this was the finest pictorial rendering of sunshine which had ever been executed. A pity that Mr. Brett's sunshine has less meaning than many another artist's shadow. He is like a millionaire in a desert, he does not know what to do with his gold.

Mr. Boughton's *Bearers of the Burden*, touched with a less faithful and less sombre, but equally vivid, hand the chord which Mr. Fildes had sounded the year previously in *The Casuals*. Most of us will remember this incident of country life, with the vista of dull road, the scarce, loveless foliage of bush and tree, the brutal men, the draggled weary women. It might have been called *The Nineteenth Century*, and served as an illustration to Burke's lament. And it was and is terribly close to the truth of the relations of the sexes amongst the English poor. The fact makes one's heart bleed to believe, but being so, perhaps the sooner it is clearly understood the better. No Englishman probably would have painted this picture,² and never (to my knowledge) did Mr. Boughton before or

¹ Perhaps the most vital defect of Mr. Long's work is a weak washy *prettiness*, which is more hopeless than any amount of crudity, or harshness of colour form. It's the preference of "Shanklin Chine" to Alp or Moorland.

² Mr. Boughton is an American.

since, do any similar work. Technically the painting was executed in a somewhat spotty ragged manner, and the colouring was more remarkable for the relative harmonies than the actual truth to nature. Altogether indeed, akin to French rather than English art, but certainly one of the most masterly pictures in the exhibition, and holding a little sermon told with an incisiveness which no one could mistake—this is what an American thought of English chivalry, and rightly.

The return of a French soldier to his home, by Mr. Marcus Stone, called *Sain et Sauvé*, must be just mentioned here for the strong and careful painting, and for the honesty of purpose. Mr. Stone is always a little over-dramatic perhaps, but he is one of those artists who put all their power of painting into their work, and who rarely miss the point at which they aim. Of late years he has dwelt (pictorially speaking) in a shady garden, in the green depths of which he places, now a graceful woman, now a gouty squire, now an amorous sportsman, and his art has become trivial and somewhat weak. But he is nevertheless one of the Academy's most genuine artists; he touches his subject with a delicate vivacity which is all his own, and he has a rare sense of womanly grace and beauty.¹

About no picture was there more diversity of opinion than Sir Frederick Leighton's *Slinger*, an Egyptian lad shying stones at sparrows, according to the unkind description of the author of *Modern Painters*. This magnificent life study hardly reached the point of a picture, and the figure seemed to overpower all the rest of the work, which looked like a theatrical background at a minor theatre, too small and thin for reality. Nevertheless, as a representation of a grand form in vigorous action, this was so fine that few things in the Academy could stand the comparison, and the study was remarkable as practically the last in which Sir Frederick painted manhood—in future years women and waxwork were to form his ideals. Mr. Watts' design of the *Ascension of Christ*, which he dedicated "to all the churches," stood, somewhat as an alien stands, amidst the fripperies of Mr. Frith, the aristocratic vacuities of Mr. Wells, and the cheap sentiment of many another Royal Academician. There were several points of beauty and meaning in the work, but such were scarcely to be appreciated here. The picture was literally crushed by the conventionality of the surroundings.

Mr. Prinsep, soon to be an Associate, had his *Minuet* in this exhibition, and on the whole the picture was the best he had painted. The subject suited him, requiring little passion or power, and the atmosphere of perfume and powder, never wholly absent from his

¹ Something of the flavour of Paris is to be traced in his domestic episodes; they are thoroughly *elegant*, even when they are not sincere.

work, was fully appropriate. His clear sharp painting showed to the best advantage in the silk stockings and satin skirts of the dancers; and the slow movement of the figures, and the old-fashioned grace of the dance, were caught to perfection. If a contrast to this were needed it might have been found in Miss Starr's *Hardly Earned*, a woman in a threadbare shawl, who has sat down wearily by her fire-side after a hard day's work. Each part of this picture was studied with a patience and elaboration beyond all praise, and the result could scarcely have been more successful. Of many hundreds of pictures, representing this and other similar well-worn subjects, I remember none which told its tale at once so simply, so powerfully, and so well.

Of all the pictures in the exhibition this was the most pathetic, but it was nearly approached by Mr. Briton Riviere's *War Time*, a country scene in winter, with an old shepherd gazing desolately across a dreary waste of snowy fields and hedges. Mr. Riviere's touch upon the feelings is very keen at times, and in this work he was quite at his best, the horrible dreariness of the landscape, and the pose and expression of its single figure, told the story intended, better than a page of description. *War Time*¹ was a genuine poem of daily life, which had this advantage over the pathos of the *Last Muster* and *The Bearers of the Burden* that the motive was drawn from a deeper well of feeling, and combined therewith a greater amount of natural beauty.

1876 In reference to this year's Academy exhibition the late Lord Beaconsfield, with his usual happy audacity of statement, and contempt for the intelligence of his hearers, expatiated upon the originality and power of the English schools of painting, and told the delighted artists who clustered round him, that the eyes of Europe were fixed upon the walls of the Academy. Now, however, that the roses of that Academy banquet are dead, and the polished periods of the great earl have ceased to confuse our judgment, we must confess that this was as dull and uninteresting an exhibition as any one of the decade.

There were two large pictures by Leighton and Poynter, and half a dozen interesting ones by little-known painters. There was one of Mr. H. W. B. Davis' best landscapes (sufficiently criticised elsewhere), and a beautiful little Alma-Tadema, *An Audience with Agrippa*. Notable this last, amongst many other merits, for complete mastery over different conditions of light and shade, and for the excessive difficulties of perspective² which the artist had vanquished.

¹ The poem illustrated by this picture was by Sidney Dobell.

² Owing to the point of view chosen. Mr. Tadema's perspective, however, is always carefully worked out for him by a draughtsman who performs the same duty for several well-known artists.

Mr. Brett, in *A certain Trout Stream*, was ill at ease, away from his favourite ground—or rather water—and Mr. Moore's little work called *Beads* was exquisite in quality, but scarcely more important than a cameo. Mr. Briton Riviere, who turns to subtler modern instances a similar power to that which Landseer possessed of giving human meaning and emotion to animal life, had this year left his true region of pathos, and in his *Stern Chase is always a Long Chase*¹ burlesqued the power which he should have honoured. Herkomer had returned to his native Bavaria for a subject, and his *At Death's Door* distinctly failed to touch the chord of pathos at which it aimed. Millais' child picture, *Forbidden Fruit*, lacked much of his usual charm, and his portrait of Lord Lytton was one of the worst he ever painted. Mr. Orchardson's *Flotsam and Jetsam*, and Mr. Leslie's *My Duty towards my Neighbour*, were fair examples of their respective artists, but neither specially representative nor interesting, and Mr. Watts' three portraits were open to the same remark. A portrait by R. Herdman of Thomas Carlyle was finely and quietly painted, and Mr. Prinsep's *Linen Gatherers*, a companion picture to his *Gleaners*² of the preceding year, only missed its meaning by being too disdainful of the subject. These linen gatherers were neither work-women nor ladies, but something between the two.

The great picture of the year both in size and importance was the *Daphnephoria* of Sir Frederick Leighton, a very large canvas representing one of the ancient Grecian festivals in honour of Apollo. The composition was a purely decorative one, the subject being chosen for the opportunities afforded of introducing beautiful things, people, and scenery. The picture was, save in this respect, motiveless, and looked out of place in the gallery. There was a lack of concentration and meaning, or rather the meaning wanted concentration, and the long line of beautiful figures was uninteresting because aimless. We cannot fix the point of interest in a panorama. In some ways this painting marks an epoch in Sir Frederick Leighton's artistic life, for he has not since painted compositions of more than one or two figures.

From this work to Mr. Poynter's *Atalanta's Race* the change was at first very great, but for once was little to the younger painter's disadvantage. *Atalanta's Race* failed as a dramatic presentment of the subject, and was injured by that dulness (I had almost said ugliness) of colouring which affects Mr. Poynter's painting so frequently and so injuriously. Nevertheless this was a picture of considerable power,

¹ A long line of ducks chasing a drake, who has caught a frog—and has not had time to eat his prey.

² The *Gleaners* should have been mentioned in 1875; it was one of Mr. Prinsep's best pictures.



FAME

E. BLAIR LEIGHTON

From the original study in monochrome in the author's possession

and showed long continued industry and study. No one could help seeing that the painter was striving after an exceptionally high ideal of art, and giving up much in the struggle¹—there was little grace in the picture, no softness or splendour of colouring, and no beauty of drapery, but there was much grappling with difficult problems of muscular action, scientific drawing of arrested, and continuous movement, and there was a certain strong individuality about the whole painting, which gave it vigour and reality. This was the third (if we mistake not) of the pictures intended for Lord Wharncliffe's billiard-room, and certainly the best.

Mr. P. R. Morris' *Sailor's Wedding* excited a good deal of comment, and very justly, for though in a poor style of art, the picture was clever and amusing, and represented a sailor and his bride, followed by their friends and bridesmaids, walking by the sea after the wedding ceremony. The composition was full of wind and spray, the bridegroom holding on his hat with one hand, while he grasped his wife with the other, and every one was being well blown about, and drenched with salt water. It was the kind of painting which, with substitution of French for English people, you might expect to see at the Salon, and in the manner of the misty execution resembled the work of the *Beaux Arts* rather than that of the Academy. Mr. Morris was two years after this elected an Associate, but he has since made no success at all equal to that of this picture.²

Mr. Andrew Gow's *Relief of Leyden* was of very different merit : one of the few genuine and valuable historical paintings in the Academy, though the historical portion was of the slightest, as the subject was treated mainly from the point of view of character and picturesque incident. The scene represented the quays of Leyden, when the vessels, laden with bread, were entering the harbour. Certainly Mr. Gow's most sympathetic, if not his finest, painting, carefully studied in all accessories, and full of good drawing and right expression. Not a great picture, for it lacked genius, and was too evidently painted without any strong emotion, but a bit of honest craftsmanship well bestowed, shirking no difficulty, and justifying its daring by success. A little picture by Mr. George Clausen, called *High Mass in a Fishing Village on the Zuyder Zee*,³ gave promise of considerable powers in a then little known painter. Mr. Clausen has since become successful, but he has done no better work, and very

¹ Mr. Poynter's work, we need hardly say, is founded upon the style of Michelangelo, and in the endeavour to attain the dignity and force of his great original, the painter sacrifices all else.

² *Their First Communion*, a scene at Dieppe, was probably the artist's most popular work next to this. A small replica of this last is, I am told, in the Grosvenor Gallery for the present year (1883), but I have not seen it.

³ Dutch people by a Dutch painter, a good reason for the picture's success ; the interest and truth of feeling are manifest.

little as good as this. At present he paints Haverstock Hill, and Girls' Schools coming down its slopes, and such like subjects.

In conclusion of this year's exhibition must be mentioned *The Old Soldier* of Mr. Orchardson. *The Old Soldier* was a good specimen of the painter's art, *homeless, ragged, and tanned* throughout. With nearly every defect of subject and method that a painting could have, this composition nevertheless possessed the indefinable charm which lurks somewhere in Mr. Orchardson's pictures. Perhaps the truth is that of all English artists this is one of the least conventional and the most artistic. Philistinism never seems to have touched him: he paints how he pleases and what he pleases; and as for the proprieties, why, they may all go—elsewhere. I only offer this as a possible explanation of the reason why his ragged, yellow, half-empty canvases have so much attraction. One other merit must be mentioned, that he has, when he chooses to exert it, a very special faculty of delicate colouring. Some faint harmonies of pink and yellow, greyish green and buff colour, he manages with a tact and *chic* which are quite French—not a colourist, but a wonderful master of tint.¹ Mr. Macbeth's *Lincolnshire Gang* was one of the fine pictures of the year; but I must only mention it, and Mr. Buckman's *Tug of War* (a clever piece of decoration this last), and pass to the year 1877.

1877 The right word for this year's exhibition was *respectable*; nice sentiment, pretty painting, small ideals, and large prices, would describe nine-tenths of the collection, and the absence of striking pictures was more noticeable. Nearly all the painters of whom I have spoken most in the preceding pages, Leighton, Watts, Poynter, Leslie, Marks, Alma-Tadema, Albert Moore, and Marcus Stone, send unimportant contributions, while M. Tissot, whose pictures are always among the events of the Academy, has deserted the exhibition, and Miss Thompson has wisely opened an exhibition of her pictures by themselves, where soldiers (in uniform) will be admitted free, and the ordinary public at the price of one shilling.²

As, with the exception of Mr. Watts' *Dove*, and Mr. Dicksee's *Harmony*, there were few pictures of great interest, it will be a good year to speak generally of the landscape art which was prevalent at this time. This may be divided roughly into three classes, as in the following list, though of course any such division can only be an approximately correct one, as several of the painters mentioned therein are upon the border-land, and might, with almost equal accuracy, be placed in one class as the other.

¹ Since then Mr. Orchardson has done some magnificent work.

² Permissible at the time when Miss Thompson's work received much bold advertisement.

Academic Landscape (more or less conventional).—Leader, Vicat Cole, The Linnells, C. E. Johnson, Oakes, Redgrave; *and with Animals*—Ansdell, Cooper, Davis, Birket Foster.

Modern English Landscape (chiefly realistic).—Hook, Brett, Alfred Hunt, Henry Moore, Albert Goodwin, Aumonier.

Scotch Naturalist Landscape.—Peter Graham, MacWhirter, Colin Hunter, Hamilton Macallum, Lockhart.

I do not name these as necessarily the best of the school, but as fair representatives; the list is not intended to be exhaustive, nor can it be said to be strictly accurate. Pages would be needed to define the exact sense in which each of these painters is conventional, Academic, or realistic, and the label I have affixed must only be considered as a rough and ready generalisation, useful for purposes of description. None of this first class are really conventional in the sense that Poussin and Claude were so, but their style may be described as a half-naturalistic, half-conventional one, founded upon an inability to resist the influence of modern art, and yet hankering after the restrictions and dignities of the ancient methods. The necessity of formal composition, for instance, which I have alluded to above as characteristic of Claude, is accepted by all these painters, but they are unprepared to pay precisely the price which is necessary, to surrender, that is, the naturalism of modern art, and so they attempt to give something of the outside form of earlier work; to balance their composition, to arrange their light and shade, etc., in a similar manner, and all the while to twist Nature into accordance with this. The proceeding is a half-hearted one, and the result is necessarily poor. The old landscape painters were not great because of what they rejected, but for what they gave; they viewed Nature as a whole, in subordination to their traditions of dignity and meaning, and painted her in relation to men of like traditions; their works were grandiose often, erroneous frequently, and limited always; but they were never timid and never unmeaning. But a landscape which is constructed somewhat in their manner, and yet is informed with nothing of their spirit, must be always both feeble and contradictory. Feeble, because it was the spirit rather than the form, in which lay the power of these painters, and contradictory because the artist will profess to be ignorant of much that he must know. Mr. Vicat Cole, for instance, paints with infinite dexterity, and composes his picture with great care (so do Mr. Oakes and Mr. C. E. Johnson, so did Mr. Redgrave), but his pictures leave us cold and uninterested, for the simple reason that they have neither the dignity of the old school nor the truth of the new. If Nature is to be painted without any relation to man—as it was never painted by the

old masters—then by all means let it be done literally. Let us have our sturdy Brett, denying that relation and meaning are possible. That is the only excuse for such work. Why should a landscape be composed, except for a special purpose? Why take away truth and simplicity if we are not going to add to meaning? What is the defence for those compositions of Turner's which we are all agreed to admire, except that they *do* give the meaning, for which they sacrifice the truth? And this is really the whole secret of composition. He is a mere tyro in art who imagines composition to consist only or chiefly in the superior pleasantness of the arrangement of certain lines above others; its chief faculty is to increase the enjoyment by adding to the strength, the meaning, or the clearness of the impression, which the painter wishes to convey—and if he has nothing to convey—What then?

These remarks apply to all the painters in the first class—they are working on wrong principles—they are doing clever but futile work. The only men living at this day who had done genuine landscapes, based upon the principles of ancient days, were the elder Linnell and Mr. Samuel Palmer. Both men were over seventy at this period, and their art had consequently been formed before the newer school came into existence.¹ This is sheer plain truth, unpalatable as it may be to painters and their friends, that what used to be understood (and what, according to history, is properly meant) by landscape art, is absolutely dead in England at the present day. We have men who can paint Nature—in bits. We have not a single man who can paint a great landscape picture. Had Mr. Cecil Lawson lived, he might, perhaps, have done so, had he ever settled his style, and made up his mind exactly what it was that he intended to do; but when he died (last year) he was still *swallowing formulae*, as Kingsley has it, and with his death all hope disappeared. Linnell, for nearly half a century the best landscape painter at the Academy,² died in the same year, and in the year before died Samuel Palmer.

But if the Academic landscape fails us, what shall we say of the Scotch (so-called) naturalistic school? Of all pictures of scenery exhibited at the Academy, this has been, for the last ten years, the most favoured by the authorities, and, speaking broadly, if a large landscape has been exhibited on the line during that period, it was in seven cases out of ten by a member of this school. Messrs. Graham and MacWhirter in landscape, and Messrs. Colin Hunter and Hamilton Macallum in sea and river landscape, have had their habitual places of honour, *usque ad nauseum*, so let us say a few words upon this special development of our national art.

¹ Mr. "Toots" would call it *cheek*.

² Never a member, though he was a candidate for about twenty years, after which he withdrew his name.



THE LADY OF SHALOTT
J. W. WATERHOUSE. A. R. A.

The first and chief peculiarity is size and confidence—the second characteristic triviality and haste. But allied with these qualities, there are to be found in the works of this school, or at all events of the leading members, merits which partly redeem the work. To understand these we must bear in mind that most of the most earnest painting of Nature in the present day is either wearied, over-subtle, or morbid. The pre-Raphaelites, amongst much good, have done some harm to landscape art, and have this to answer for, that they have caused many painters either to despair of painting landscape at all, or have forced them into missing in their research those broad, simple aspects of Nature, which all know and all can appreciate. With characteristic keenness, the Scotchmen perceived that there was a great opening for those who would relieve the public mind from the oppression of these laboured, over-minute, almost over-faithful, paintings, which needed knowledge to be understood and feeling to be appreciated, and so they chose their part. Ignorant of the traditions of the great masters on the one hand, and contemptuous alike of the difficulties and the aspirations of the pre-Raphaelites on the other, they covered large spaces of canvas with such simple matters as a mass of mountain mist, or a flash of sunlight on the side of a green hill. Now and then a broken bough, a herd of rough-coated oxen, a flock of sea-birds, some stormy water, or a blasted pine-tree, was introduced to give emphasis to the composition, but the painting was chiefly representative of simple natural truths, and its relation was as distant from great landscape art on the one hand, as from great realistic art on the other.

I am not denying either the skill or the power of these men. I *am* denying that their art is worthy to be called great in any way whatever. The truth is entirely of the superficial kind; succeeding when at all successful, by ignoring all the finer qualities of form and colour, all the subtler effects of sun and shadow, all the more refined and glorious facts of Nature.

I must not, however, enlarge upon this topic, and will only describe briefly the third class of landscapists. These are to be spoken of with, at once, reverence and pity. Reverence, because they are painfully, and with little applause and personal success, building up the foundations on which must rest the landscape art of the future; and pity, because that art will never be seen by them but as Moses saw the Promised Land from the top of Pisgah. The microscopic minuteness and brilliancy of Mr. Brett; the no less wonderful delicacy and iridescent colour of Mr. Alfred Hunt; the gentle simple veracity of Mr. Aumonier; the vivid impressions of the Wyllies; the delicate imagination and truth to atmospheric effect of Mr. Albert Goodwin,—all of these things are

precious in their way, and all of these are preparing the road for a new landscape art. But as yet these men are working, as it were, at the different parts of a pin, and in ignorance of their ultimate destination. Whatever this may be, theirs is the only vital painting of Nature in England at present—their mission, though humble, is neither fruitless nor insincere.

It seemed better in a review like the present to speak thus generally of this branch of art before giving especial mention to this or that picture. In all these classes many individual pictures are worthy of admiration, from the Scotch mountains of Mr. Graham, to the fairy voyages of Sinbad by Mr. Goodwin. Mr. Halswelle paints a long stretch of rolling clouds, with a truth of power and a consistency of series hitherto unknown, gives us sky landscapes, as an Irishman might say; and the grey mystery of a stormy sea is shown us by Mr. Henry Moore for the first time in its full and dreary beauty. Calm waters, in sunshine and in shadow, have been drawn by Mr. Macallum and Mr. Aumonier to a point which is very near to perfection, and so throughout the list.¹ A last word must be given to the veteran artist who has brightened twenty years of the Academy with his work, and never sent a single picture which did not breathe of English breezes, and glow with English health. To Mr. Hook belongs the supreme praise of having found beauty and truth in what lay nearest to his hand, and of having succeeded in creating a series of landscapes and seascapes, which are as national in their truth, as they are universal in their loveliness. Technically, too, this painter must rank at the head of all our landscape artists, though of late years his work has been somewhat slighter and coarser than of old. Such pictures as the *Luff Boy* and *The Trawlers* glow with a loveliness of colour, which has scarcely a parallel in English painting, and are at once true in their feeling, worthy in their subject, and dignified in their conception and treatment.

Amongst the younger artists the chief success of the year was won by one just emerged from studenthood, named Frank Dicksee—*Harmony*, so he called this scene of a lover and his mistress playing the organ, was remarkable both in a technical and a sentimental sense. The execution was careful, skilful, and patient in a high degree, and the quiet interest of the scene was exactly hit off. It was, to use an artist's phrase, a happy picture. Everything had gone right therein. The contrast of feeling especially, between the devotional

¹ No one who reads this description of the landscape painters, will feel more keenly than the present writer its excessive imperfection, and my only excuse must be that I had to choose what I would leave out.

enthusiasm of the girl, and the very human passion of her lover, was rendered with great distinctness, if not great subtlety, and the success of the whole picture was as genuine as it was undoubted. Since then Mr. Dicksee has gone on steadily improving in his technique, till he may now be considered one of our most skilful painters.¹ A great artist he is not at present, despite what his admirers tell him, for his compositions are too cold, too mechanical in their perfection; but his skill of hand is really marvellous, and should he ever discover that there is a third organ in a painter's composition besides hand and brain, he may do very great things. At present he only does very *praiseworthy* ones.²

The Dove returning to the Ark, by Mr. Watts, formed perhaps the strongest possible contrast to the *Harmony* just mentioned. And yet this was a harmony too, of rainy sky and ruffled plumage, and troubled water. The least describable, and the most poetical picture ever hung upon the Academy walls. It was little appreciated at the time, but a few people cared for it very much, even then, and since it has been exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, the opinion of the few has become that of the general public.

Contrast again with these faint harmonies of blue and grey the *tour de force* of Mr. Millais, called *The Yeoman of the Guard*, in which a scarlet uniform blazed into insignificance the poor mortal whose healthy, vacuous face loomed above its splendour. Or contrast, with Mr. Watts' sad-tempered, thoughtful reverence, and hinted poetry, the matter-of-fact dexterity and prose with which Mr. Long painted his *Egyptian Feast*, and chose perhaps the most significant of all ancient customs, as a medium for showing off his acquaintance with the forms of Egyptian furniture. Or for a contrast of a different kind, think of the romantic historical painting of Sir John Gilbert, and notice how his dressed-up, over-accentuated picture of *Cardinal Wolsey at Leicester*, almost vulgarised its really patriotic subject, and reduced the interest of the spectator to a mere question of champing steeds, flashing armour, and smoky torchlight.

The succession of Sir Frederick Leighton to the post left absent by the death of Sir Francis Grant was the great event of this year's Academy. It inaugurated a new era of change, and an advance to a more liberal policy. It foreshadowed a greater tolerance for Continental forms of art, and, in fact, as liberal a policy as could be maintained under the circumstances. All of this has been fulfilled, and the Academy is in many respects, notably in its general interest, greatly improved. If English painting is not what it once was, or

¹ He was elected to the Academy rather more than a year ago.

² This of course was written nearly six years ago. Since then Mr. Dicksee has shown conclusively that he will only do in the future the work which has rendered him popular in the past. His painting grows more Philistine, more respectable, and less interesting yearly.—1892.

now might be, there is more of good foreign work to be seen at Burlington House, and traces of that influence can be seen in the painting of many of our artists. Sir Francis Grant was a sportsman and a kindly-hearted gentleman, rather than an artist; Sir Frederick Leighton is a man of rare artistic talent, who has seen much of many forms of art, and acquired a tolerance for all. Artistically he is something like Mr. Brooke in *Middlemarch*, and we can fancy him saying to a young student, Ah, Titian now; I went in a good deal for him at one time, and so on throughout the list. But he has a keen eye for merit of any kind, he is no less kind-hearted than his prototype, and with far more judgment has helped many a young artist who would otherwise have had but a bad time, and he makes, as people are almost tired of saying, an ideal President. Possibly a man whose genius was greater, and whose education had been less widely gathered, might have done something towards bringing into some accordance the different aims and practices of English artists at the present time, but short of this, Sir Frederick Leighton has done everything. And the very last election to the Academic ranks, that of Messrs. Macbeth and Gregory,¹ was the most tolerant and liberal one which had ever taken place.

The compositions which attracted most attention this year were the portraits of a Society-beauty (Mrs. Langtry), and the series of pictures by Mr. Frith, R.A., entitled *The Road to Ruin*. The former we need not criticise further than to say that they were three in number, of which Mr. Millais' was a fine graceful picture and a good likeness, Mr. Poynter's a very elaborate and very dull piece of good painting, and Mr. Weigall's indifferent as a likeness, and poor as a work of art.

But the series of *The Road to Ruin* demands attention as a good type of a species of art which has been for the last thirty or forty years very popular in England. These compositions professed to represent the career of a modern spendthrift, and were perhaps intended to rival the celebrated series of Hogarth. I have said nothing hitherto of Mr. Frith's art, for the same reason for which I have omitted (and shall omit) the names and works of many another Academician of the same school.² Whatever their merits may be, and there is much careful thought and occasional good painting bestowed upon them, their shortcomings are too evident to need description, or to warrant interest. It seems inconceivable to many people that some of these painters should be deemed worthy of Academic honours, and I prefer to omit them altogether

¹ I have said nothing of Mr. Gregory's work in this paper, chiefly because none of his best paintings have appeared at the Academy.

² Again I do not mention the names for obvious reasons, but the diligent art-student will be at no loss to supply the omission; it may be gathered from this paper, by what, I think, the late Mr. Mill called *The Method of Residues*.

from these notes, rather than spend time and patience in explaining defects which should be evident to every one who cares for art. If they give pleasure to the public, and it must be supposed that in some inscrutable way they must do so, or their pictures would not continue to be painted, so much the better for those artists; and the sooner a critic or a painter arises to tell us what single great artistic merit is to be found in such work, the better for every one. But when, speaking generally, we see year after year a mass of pictures exhibited, which possess neither beauty of form, beauty of colour, nor beauty of meaning, when we find the subject of these pictures devoted to the most trivial of domestic incidents, or the most used-up specimens of domestic fiction, we are, I think, justified in assuming that, until some explanation be given us of their merit, we may pass them by in silence.

Mr. Frith, however, is a typical instance of a painter who has been immensely popular, and whose work must have some great attraction. *The Road to Ruin* shows us what that attraction is: it is the attraction of subject, carefully chosen and clearly expressed. Now to expression of a certain kind artistic capacity is only a hindrance. Advertisements, the trader will tell you, may be too artistic. And in some way Mr. Frith's pictures may be considered as moral or social advertisements. They are, so to speak, printed in big type, for those who run to read, and those who run (round picture galleries) do read them easily. They occupy nearly the same relation to serious figure-painting, that the Scotch realists do to landscape art, *i.e.* that of broad elementary statements of facts. It would be wrong to say there is no art in them. There is great art in saying anything so clearly that the biggest fool in the world can understand it. But not *fine* art, that's another matter. And it is this which Mr. Frith has reduced to a science. If he paints the *Derby Day* it is a concentrated essence of everything which is connected in the popular mind with Epsom and racing. If he paints a *Railway Station* it is the typical railway station. Every dot is put upon every "i"; no imagination is necessary to complete the picture. Given this, given also great dexterity in the marshalling of his facts and figures, and an utter absence of any predilection for one kind of incident over another, and the reason for his popularity is evident at once. Add to this the fact that the painter never offends by any undue lack of conventionality, but gratifies in all his work that cautious avoidance of disagreeable truth, and love of observance and propriety, which is characteristic of the middle-class Englishman. This was the secret of the success of *The Road to Ruin*, round which an excited mob struggled day after day, under the guardianship of two friendly policemen. *A young gentleman*¹ *playing cards in his rooms in college—A young gentleman*

¹ Singularly unlike what undergraduates used to be in my time.

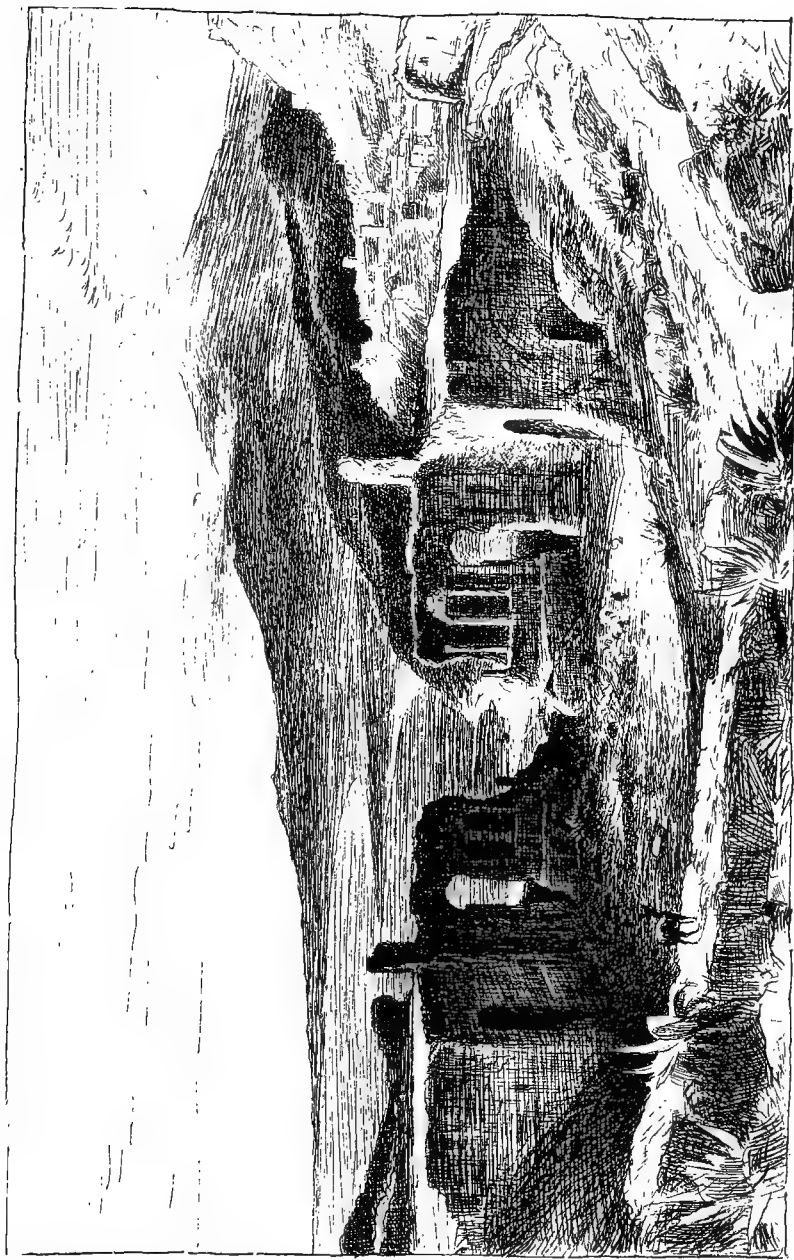
in a white greatcoat, betting at Ascot—A young gentleman being arrested for debt—A young gentleman writing for the papers while his wife nurses the baby—and, finally, A young gentleman blowing out his brains in a garret,—such were the incidents of The Road to Ruin. All honour to Mr. Frith for the clearness with which he preached this little sermon. The advertisement was as clear as one of the placards of the Salvation Army; but the place for such homilies is not on the walls of the Academy. All these fashionable frock-coats and gloves and white ties, and polished boots and dressing-gowns; all these details of rosewood furniture, green table-cloths, and cut-glass decanters; all this stage business of life, in spasms of gambling, scribbling, and suicide—this is not fine art, not even nature. It is simply cheap shoddy, manufactured sentiment—sentiment of the scene-shifter and the costumier—and the sooner it is estimated at its proper value the better.

It is not as if the evil stopped at the waste of power of the clever man who gives us this rubbish, it affects every one whom his ability forces to take an interest in such work; all appreciation of true art becomes impossible to folks who are accustomed to futilities. The painting bears as much relation to art, as the abuse of a Society paper does to literature, and is about as valuable, and has, moreover, this in common, that those who become accustomed to its personalities care little for any other species of information. I have mentioned Mr. Frith's name in connection with it, and omitted others, because he is a man of such great ability that it renders the mistake of his painting the more pitiable.¹ Had he turned his strong powers of delineating fact to painting the real, instead of the sham, life which he saw round him; he might perhaps have been another and a more genial Hogarth, but, as it is, he has never descended below the superficial aspects of his facts, and has not given us a single picture in which the sentiment, the passion, or the feeling, has not been purely conventional.

Mr. Eyre Crowe was elected an Associate in this year, and sent a fair specimen of his precise, hard, and unpleasant-coloured painting. This was, to the public, one of the inscrutable elections in which the Academy used so frequently to indulge, for whatever may be thought of Mr. Crowe's merits by his admirers, they have certainly never entitled him to Academic rank.

Mr. Armitage sent a very important work to this exhibition: a composition of many figures, entitled *Serf Emancipation*. It represented a Saxon noble giving freedom to his slaves on his death-bed. It was as good an example of this painter's work as could be

¹ And besides that, because he is so popular that there is little fear of my words making any difference to his reputation. I believe this to be true, but it is like everything I wrote at this period, too strongly expressed—a very bad habit writing for the press almost invariably produces.—1892.



TAORMINA. — M^o WHINTER, A. R. A.

wished, dignified and carefully composed, accurate though very harsh and unlovely in its drawing, and aiming more at the qualities of fresco than oil painting. Notable as an attempt at a higher ideal than ordinary, it could not justly be said to be successful. It was like a Scotch sermon, too long, too ponderous, and too dogmatic.

Very little else in this exhibition of more than average merit. A pleasant society picture of Mr. Perugini of a woman having her hair powdered, and an equally pleasant bit of Nature by Aumonier, of *Easton Broad, Suffolk*. Large landscapes of inferior interest and equal skill of those of former years, by Messrs. Brett and Millais, and a clever bit of dramatic painting by Mr. Pettie, of a half-naked Highlander, *Hunted Down*. This was a picture as unpleasant as it was powerful. A magnificent study of *Palm Trees and Bananas*, by Mr. E. W. Cooke, and a fine unfinished picture by Mr. J. G. Lewis, R.A.¹

Two interesting pictures by Mr. Hodson, one humorous, the other poetical; a pretty group of children by Mr. Leslie, and four of Mr. Tadema's most successful small pictures, entitled *The Seasons*. Quite admirable these last, accepting the artist's exclusively sensuous point of view. Mr. Long's *Egyptian Feast* has already been incidentally noticed, and with a glance of pleasure at Mr. Watts' lovely portrait of a lovely woman, Miss Dorothy Tennant, I must pass to the exhibition of 1879.²

1879 This was a collection in which the lesser-known men bore the chief part—a strong average exhibition, very disappointing in the main features, or what should have been the main features. Sir Frederick Leighton's *Elijah* was large, ambitious, and unsatisfactory, unpleasing in the attitude of the prophet, and uninteresting in the angel. Clever only as an anatomical study of a difficult posture. Mr. Poynter's *Nausicaa* was even less satisfactory; poor in colour and composition, and lacking in all the delicate grace which the story required. Mr. Fildes' *Return of the Penitent* was important in size, but missed the dramatic point; one had to look for the penitent, who was huddled up in a corner of the picture, the main part of which was occupied by a conventional group of labourers and villagers—a composition, not a picture. Mr. Pettie's *Death Warrant*, though impressive and powerful, scarcely showed sufficient study of character, or refinement of work, to justify the scale adopted; it was conventionally dramatic, and grew less attractive upon each successive examination. Mr. Goodall's companion

¹ The last picture on which Mr. Lewis worked.

² I have omitted the 1878 exhibition, unintentionally in the first place, and I do not supply the omission; since I wish these notes to represent only what was written in the essay here reproduced.

pictures of *Hagar and Ishmael*, *Sarah and Isaac*, were comparatively unimportant; and might, perhaps, not be unfairly described as religious *pot-boilers*. They had the simplicity of Mr. Goodall's best work, but neither the insight nor the dignity. Mr. Sant's *Adversity* showed him at his best, but this Academician is not one of our great painters; he is the Frith of portraiture.

The portraits were very good, however. The *Gladstone* of Sir John Millais, strong, serious, and life-like, equally unaffected in pose and painting; and the *Samuel Cousins*, *R.A.*, by Mr. Frank Holl, sufficiently true and good to make his reputation in this line. This was Mr. Holl's first great success as a portrait painter; and since then he has never lacked sitters, and in fact now does little work of other kinds.¹

And some of the younger men did very good work. Sir John Macallum's *Water Frolic*, with its sunny sea and larking swimmers, was bright and fresh as Nature itself; Mr. Ernest Parton's *Waning of the Year*, a wonderful specimen of elaborate study of Nature, though the chief charm of the work was the extreme delicacy of its harmonious grey and green. Mr. Alfred Parsons' *Ending of Summer*, and Mr. George Reid's *Norham*, and Mr. Aumonier's *Norfolk Broad*, and Mr. Hennessy's *Aftermath*, and Ernest Waterlow's *Midsummer Day*, and Mr. James Macbeth's *Scotch Mountains*, were all good careful landscapes, and marked by a suggestion of poetry and thought. *Their Only Harvest*, by Mr. Colin Hunter, almost reconciled us to the ruggedness of the painting by the force with which the meaning was driven home. No work in the whole of the Academy told the story so clearly as this picture of the fishermen gathering seaweed from the waves on a stormy evening. The danger and dreariness of the sea were perhaps never more powerfully expressed. Good, too, in this manner, was the pathetic picture of *The Empty Saddle*, by Mr. S. E. Waller—a servant bringing home his master's horse, and Mr. F. A. Bridgman's *Royal Pastime in Nineveh* showed an amount of thought, and care in details, which would not have disgraced Mr. Tadema himself. Mr. Blair Leighton's *Till Death do us Part*, was an idyll of society life, told with an incisive force which Mr. Frith must have envied—for it vanquished him on his own ground; the work, moreover, was relieved from commonplaceness by the extreme solidity and sharpness of the painting, and by an amount of expression rare in this style of picture. Mr. C. Green, most skilful and original of illustrators, sent *A Consultation*, which

¹ A pity, but who can blame an artist for being tempted by the prices paid just now for portraits! In fact, all prices now are preposterous for people with a fashionable reputation. While this was passing through the press, Mr. Briton Riviere's *Sympathy*, a portrait of a little girl sitting upon the stairs with a white dog by her side, has been sold at Christie's for two thousand five hundred guineas. This picture was neither large nor exceptionally well painted, nor remarkable in any way whatever.

is probably the best work he ever did ; a pity that its ability should be so fruitless, and Mr. Barnard,¹ whose ability equals Mr. Green's, but is less subtle and, perhaps, less refined in its humour, contributed *At the Pantomime*, a contrast between the pleasure of a child at her first play, and the weariness of an old man at his last. Mr. H. M. Paget, but lately an Academy student, sent an illustration to *Enid*, which showed power and study, and Mr. Lockhart's *Gil Blas* was vividly conceived and expressed. These, with the *Bailiff's Daughter* of Mr. Brewtnall,² were all interesting, and in one way or another good work, and made up in some measure for the deficiencies of better-known artists. But the exhibition was on the whole dreary and uninteresting, and never had the want of high aim amongst the Academicians been more painfully evident. As one passed from room to room only to encounter the same worn-out themes, treated in the same conventional manner, the heart and brain grew weary as the feet, for, speaking generally, there was to be found here in the majority of the work, neither thought nor beauty.

Three artists aimed, however, at this last, Messrs. Long, Brett, and Goodwin, and their work deserves attention. Mr. Long in his *Esther* and *Vashti*, two large companion pictures, showed us two types of Eastern beauty, richly adorned, and surrounded with all appropriate accessories. Attractive and powerfully painted as these were, they lacked depth of feeling, and real penetration into their subjects, and presented only a superficial book-of-beauty sort of loveliness, something akin to those large-eyed young ladies whom Miss Florence Claxton draws for the advertisements of *How small these gloves make one's hands look !* or the *something-or-other corset*. Mr. Brett sought his realistic beauty of sun and sea successfully in his *Stronghold of the Saison*, but the scene was almost oppressively still and hot, and lacked the freshness with which this artist usually invested his landscapes.

Mr. Albert Goodwin had two *Voyages of Sinbad*, which were the only works in the Academy deserving the epithet of imaginative. Delicate compositions these, in which reality and unreality were mingled so gently and so inextricably, that the mind accepted them as frankly as the incongruities of a dream. I remember no touch of nature in modern art more beautifully introduced, than the painting of the pools of sea-water in one of these pictures. The wrecked ship lay stranded upon one side of the shore, and Sinbad was going hurriedly up the beach towards the cliffs ; but, in the foreground near the wreck, a great case of oranges had been burst open

¹ Mr. Barnard's best picture, however, should have been noticed previously, in 1877. A *Saturday Night* in the East End of London. A work which, although almost repulsive in its details, realised very powerfully a scene which is perhaps as significant a one as any in English life.

² Hung where it could hardly be seen.

by the force of the waves, and the golden fruit was floating in the clear pools amongst the rocks, with little fishes nibbling at it eagerly.¹ On the other side of the moon, were the little atmospheric gems of Mr. Cecil Lawson; in which imagination showed clearly, but confusedly. The work surrendered too much to mystery, and all its meaning was only shadowed forth. One word must be given to the industrious, enthusiastic, but, alas! futile work, of Mr. Rooke, an artist who is chiefly known as an admirer of "Mr. Burne-Jones." At this time he painted habitually a series of subjects in the same frame, generally illustrative of the Old Testament. This year it was *Ahab's Coveting* which formed his subject-matter. This work was notable only for its attempt at making the qualities of design and meaning into a beautiful whole. Neither a great painter nor a good draughtsman, Mr. Rooke nevertheless might read a lesson to most of those who exhibit at the Academy, in the height of his aim, the patience of his endeavour, and in the almost sublime persistency with which he follows the best art with which he is acquainted, and he has at all events grasped two truths, that a picture should be beautiful, and should mean something.²

1880 This year there were three pictures, two of them by Academicians, which were deservedly the chief favourites, and were upon the whole the best works of their respective artists—these were *The Visit to Æsculapius*, by Mr. Poynter; *On Board the Bellerophon*, by Mr. Orchardson; and *Britannia's Realm*, by Mr. Brett.

The Visit to Æsculapius was an oil-painting enlarged from a small water-colour, which had been in the Dudley Gallery some years previously.³ In many ways this was an especially fine work, its chief defect being that inability to realise any type of female loveliness which Mr. Poynter has always shown. This Diana would have attracted no Endymion, nor, indeed, was she more attractive than the nymphs who accompanied her. But the pose of each figure was excellent; the background was constructed with great care and success; the painting good throughout, and the colour, though a little lifeless and dull, by no means unpleasant. A seriously-intended, scholarly picture, produced with labour and skill, and thoroughly deserving of the favour met with.

¹ I cannot resist stating here, that this picture of Mr. Goodwin's and its companion have since been purchased for the Gallery of his native town, Maidstone. A rare instance of honouring a prophet in his own country—before death!

² Mr. Rooke's best picture was exhibited the previous year, if I remember right, and was called *The Story of Ruth*. It was purchased by the Academy with the Chantry funds.

³ It is strange how critics and the public are affected by increased size and a change from water-colours to oils. The earlier and smaller edition of this picture was very superior to the oil-painting, but no one would see at the time that it was a work of really exquisite quality, and I remember papers, which shall be nameless, that did not even mention it.

Mr. Orchardson's work has been already criticised, and I have only space here to say of his *Napoleon on the Bellerophon* that it showed him at his very best. Always dramatic and powerful, in a more or less irresponsible fashion, the painter here manifested a restraint and a concentration which even his admirers could scarcely have expected. The situation was treated gravely and without exaggeration, and the composition was of a simple, natural kind, free from apparent artifice, and yet thoroughly good.

Mr. Brett's *Britannia's Realm* was a curious companion in patriotism—or jingoism—to Mr. Orchardson's *Napoleon*. It represented a sunny sea, and in the distance many ships dotted here and there making up channel, with what little breeze they could discover. Though not perhaps better than the painter's other works, this wide stretch of blue water was certainly more attractive to English eyes—there was a delicate compliment in the title, to each of those who looked at the broad expanse, and felt that in some sort it belonged to him. Anyway the popularity of the picture was undoubted; the hint of meaning was just what Mr. Brett's work had always lacked to render it irresistible, and no one was surprised when *Britannia's Realm* was bought by the Academy¹ (together with the two other pictures of this year that I have mentioned), and when shortly afterwards Mr. Brett was elected an Associate. As he had been one of the chief attractions of the Academy for nearly ten years, it was perhaps about time to recognise his merit.

In this year public notice began to be attracted to the Venetian street scenes of Mr. Henry Woods, full of what I must consider to be a degraded cleverness, and founded upon the manner of a still more clever Venetian painter called Van Haanen.² It would not be worth while to mention these were it not that Mr. Woods, to the surprise of every one, save the few who had noticed that his works were always hung on the line, has been lately elected an Associate of the Academy. His style of work is like that of dozens of foreign painters, but is tolerably rare in England. It is painted from dark to light, with black shadows and a deficiency of chiaroscuro. The painting possesses great manual dexterity of a coarse kind, and is probably as sharply opposed to all the methods of great Italian painting as any work could be. In subject it is exclusively vulgar, in the sense of invariably selecting incidents of little meaning and no elevation, a dirty Italian surrounded by *bric-à-brac*, a crowd of tourists and print-sellers on the Rialto, the interior of some Venetian garret or workshop—such are the themes on which Mr. Woods expends such talent as he possesses.

¹ With the funds supplied by the Chantrey bequest.

² Van Haanen is indeed a man of genius, though he does little that is worthy of his powers. The study of a nude model in this year's Grosvenor Gallery is magnificent from a technical point of view, and utterly degraded from any other.

A bad art, industriously and cleverly exercised, and thoroughly unfit to be recognised by an English academy as worthy of reward.

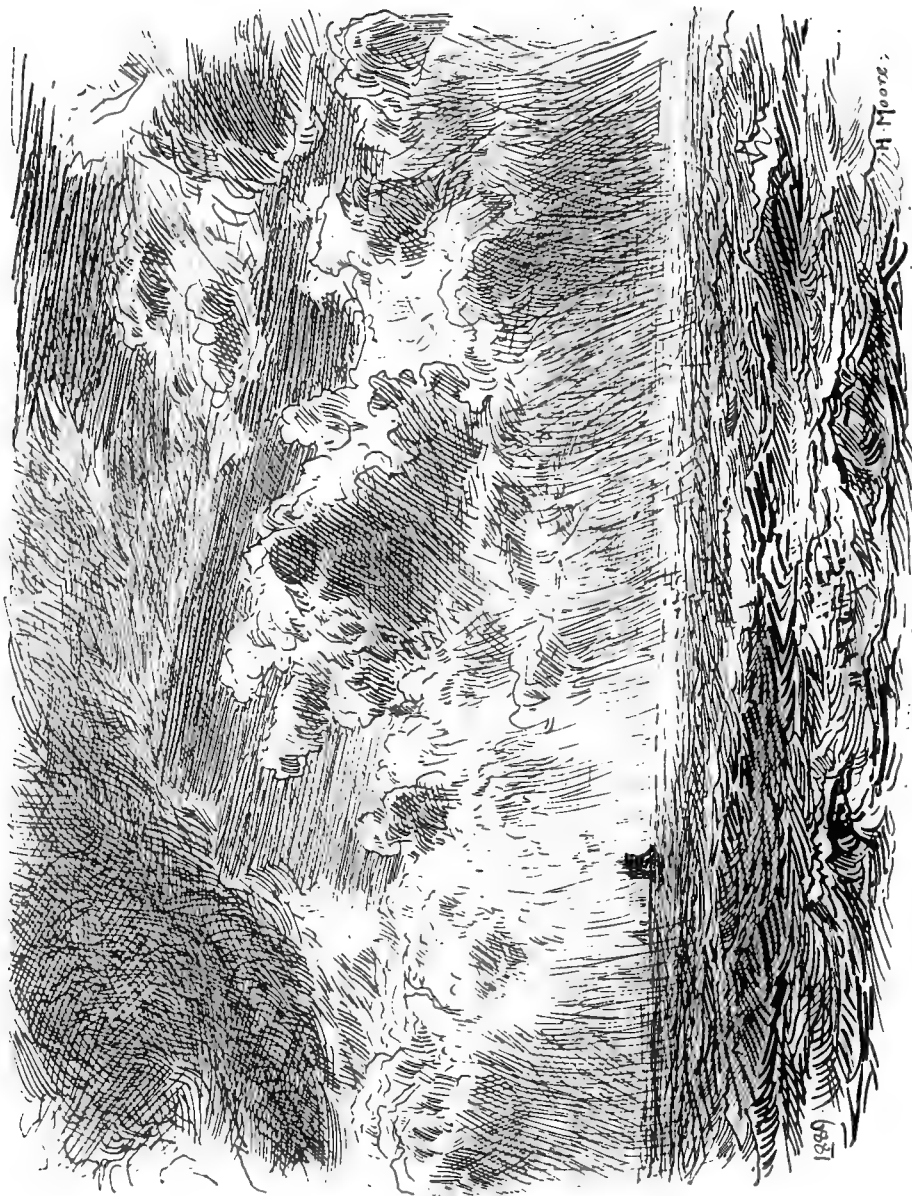
There were two beautiful landscapes in this gallery, if landscape be the right word to apply to a seaside cliff and the *Beached Margent of the Shore*. These were Mr. Alfred Hunt's picture of Whitby Churchyard, called *Unto this Last*, and Mr. Henry Moore's coast-scene, entitled as in the above quotation. The former represented the summit of a sandstone cliff, to the very edge of which came the scattered tombstones, from the midst of which rose darkly the tower of the old church. By the side of and beneath the cliff, showed the roofs of the fishermen's dwellings, and on the other side of the harbour glimmered here and there the lights of the New town. Over water, churchyard, and dwelling, a soft shadow of twilight was settling slowly, but far above all these the sky was purple and gold, as with a promise, or a hope. In all ways this was a beautiful picture, impressive without being morbid, and sad without being dreary. It would be difficult to explain to any one who did not know Whitby as a painter knows it, how essentially accurate and true this work was to the character as well as to the details of the scene. The magnificent painting of the sky, and the subtlety of colouring in the twilight town and churchyard, every one could see for himself, but the truth of such points as the character of the church and its scattered gravestones, of the manner in which the old houses lift themselves at evening against the side of the cliff, and of the aspect at sunset of the new town—all these little things peculiar to the scene can hardly be appreciated by a stranger. Perhaps the hardest thing to explain in the picture was the difference from a simple sketch of Whitby at evening, for it was far more than that, being penetrated through and through with the feeling hinted at in the title, a complex feeling, best perhaps to be described by the lines of two poets of different ages and nationalities, Gray and Longfellow :—

“ Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep ” ;

and

“ It crossed the churchyard with a sigh,
And said ‘ Not yet ! in quiet lie.’ ”

Mr. Henry Moore's picture was a very different kind, and was perhaps the finer of the two, though possessing little of Mr. Hunt's tender feeling. The effect is a fleeting one of great pictorial difficulty, given with perfect truth. The scene is a beach from which a rough sea has just ebbed, the waves beyond, and above a sky of heavy cumulus clouds, lurid with a flash of stormy sunlight. In the distance, close to the margin of the water, are a cart and horse, and a man presumably gathering seaweed or wreckage, and perhaps the subtlest piece of observation shown in the picture is the manner in



SHINE AND SHOWER
Facsimile of a sketch by Henry Moore A. R. A.

H. Moore;

1889

which Mr. Moore has painted these objects, quite firmly and distinctly, and has yet managed to give them that air of being swallowed up in the vast expanse of sky and sea by which they are surrounded. That inexplicable sense of majesty and immensity, which most of us have at some time or another felt in the presence of some of the wilder effects of Nature, has been caught fast hold of by Mr. Moore in this work, where Nature seems big, and man small, yet not somehow quite insignificant, if only because he can stand there with his horse and cart carrying out his daily work in face of all that blind power of sea and sky. In every sense of the word, this was a fine picture, and one of which an English painter might well be proud.¹

For the other extreme of merit, which received (in its painter) the Academic recognition always denied to Mr. H. Moore, it is instructive to think of Mr. MacWhirter's *Lord of the Glen*, an enormous (considering the subject) picture of a single Scotch fir on a ledge of rock; or of the same painter's still more important composition of two beehives and a hay-rake.² The contrast is advisable and instructive, as Mr. MacWhirter was at this time the only pure landscape painter who had received Associate rank for some years, and it was a very curious question for what qualities of execution or feeling he was selected. As far as I am aware, his chief qualification for election, was his capacity for painting a birch tree, a subject on which he had several times displayed his ability at the Academy. In any case, a study of the actual brushwork on his pictures may be recommended to dispirited students, as showing them how low is the standard of merit which the Academy fixes for its members.

I 88 I I must say but a very few general words as to the exhibition of this last year. Mr. Cecil Lawson's *Pool* was the most impressive and significant, if not the best landscape. The dark trees overhung the still, unhealthy-looking water, with an apparently sinister meaning, even the light on the landscape beyond looked wan and ghostly. A fine picture from its own point of view; abandoning beauty of colour and definition of form for a purpose, and gaining its end sternly. Those who admired the modern French School, found a good example of *les valeurs* in Mr. Fantin's portrait of Mdle. L—— R——, a dark woman in a black dress against a grey background. And Signor Gaetano Chièrici's *Frightful State of Things* showed a power of

¹ Some part of the description of these two pictures appeared in an article written at the time. I have repeated it here, because I believe that, though perhaps a little over-enthusiastic, the words are essentially true, and more accurate to detail than I could be after the lapse of time.

² I forget the name of this work, but it was probably *The Three Inseparables*, or *Golden Summer*, or some other such frequent title.

elaborating the plumage of various fowls, and the squalid details of a cottage interior, such as Gransommeer himself might have envied. The picture represented a child alarmed by the intrusion of various turkeys, hens, ducks, etc., all intent on seizing the piece of bread and butter he had been given to eat. It was wonderfully painted—the animals not too well drawn, but full of expression, and the child's face, in its terror and disgust, beyond praise. His very toes were curling up with anger and fear. Mr. Leader's *February fill Dyke* was one of the wet-road, evening-light landscapes, by which he is so well known, and is only noticeable here because Mr. Leader has since been elected an Associate. Mr. Long's *Diana or Christ*—his least meritorious picture—utterly failing to tell its story, or to realise the scene intended.

Mr. Millais' *Cinderella*, as pretty a child model as one could wish to see, the same as he has painted several times before and since.¹ Mr. Tadmey's *Sappho* showed his imitative dexterity at its highest point, but told no story—had, in fact, none to tell. It might as well have been called *playing at marbles*. Mr. Poynter's *Helen*, notable for some very good painting of the gold necklace; but as for the *Helen*, the remark made upon his last picture applies equally here.

The Last Voyage of Henry Hudson, of Mr. John Collier, was one of the pictures purchased this year by the Academy with the Chantrey bequest funds, a large, somewhat dismal composition representing the explorer after his crew had set him adrift, with his young son, in an open boat. It was a dull but meritorious picture, carefully drawn and painted, and telling the facts of its story unmistakably, if not reasonably; the work of a patient, conscientious painter failing to touch the chord of pathos which would have been the only excuse for the choice of such a subject. With this should, perhaps, be placed Mr. Gow's large *Montröse at Kilsyth*, which, according to Mr. Gow's usual custom, depicted a stirring semi-historical scene, but did so coldly, and with a thoroughly Scotch lack of enthusiasm. *Carlyle's Chelsea*, by Mr. Frederic Brown, I must give a word of praise to, despite its unimportance, from my knowledge of its truth to the locality. Mr. Herkomer's *Missing* was certainly the pathetic picture of the year—at all events in subject and importance. It was a very large composition of life-size figures, showing the sad crowd which gathered round the posters placed upon the dockyard gates at Portsmouth, respecting the loss of the *Atalanta*. A finely conceived picture, insufficiently thought and worked out, but good and true in intention, and instinct with a great deal of rugged power.

It seemed to me that Mr. Arthur Stock's *At Last* was even more truly pathetic than this, though it was of a simple, somewhat

¹ One of the daughters of the late Mr. Buckstone, the comedian.

hackneyed subject: the return of a bronzed soldier to his aged mother's home. Its difference from other works of the same class lay chiefly in the intensity of the expressions in the two faces, and the dramatic power with which they were contrasted. Mr. Stock had given the soldier a look of reckless, careless pleasure, of genuine, but superficial gladness, at seeing the *old lady* again; but he had given to the mother's face only patience, a patience which told of many days of past longing for *her boy*, of hope deferred, which had at last brought about almost the loss of feeling. Not a great picture artistically, but a very true, and, in one sense of the word, a beautiful one.

To be compared with it on this latter score of truth, was the composition of *The Queen's Shilling*, by Mr. P. R. Morris; the last-mentioned artist, though possessed of equal, if not superior artistic feeling to Mr. Stock, has failed entirely, because, as in Mr. Fildes' *Penitent*, he forgot the meaning of his work in the execution. He painted a picture, and incidentally illustrated a subject, and so, from all but a strictly technical point of view, the work was a failure. Mr. Walter Shaw's two studies of waves, *Atlantic Rollers* and *A Comber*, were worthy of attention and praise from their conscientiousness, but one had only to turn from them to the work of Mr. H. Moore and Mr. Hook, to see the difference between painting waves, and painting and loving the sea. The mystery and the gladness of these latter artists' work has no correspondence in Mr. Shaw's painting, elaborate and skilful as the latter is; it knows *almost* too much, and feels *far* too little.

I should like to have contrasted the studious elaborate art of Sir James Linton with the sincerity of aim, multiplicity of detail, and the broader, more superficial, and more dramatic manner of Mr. Seymour Lucas, but it is quite time to bring these already over-long notes to a close, and only mention those artists as doing good work, and with them Messrs. Crofts and Caton Woodville, the battle painters, the latter of whom was to do in the following year the best English battle-picture I know — that of the *Retreat from Maiwand*.

To sum up the results of these scattered notes on the exhibitions of the Royal Academy from 1872 to this date (1881) a few points may be noticed.

The old traditions of the Academy, gathered mainly from the Dutch and Flemish schools, and consolidated by the practice and influence of such men as Mulready, the elder Leslie, and Wilkie, have passed away, and at the present time every one is painting in his own wild way. The time is not one of decline, but of change. Foreign art is powerfully affecting English; its merits, eccentricities, and failings are all visible. English painting is no longer

so dull nor so good as of old, but more lively and less settled. Landscape is practically dead, and Scotch impressionism, pre-Raphaelite minuteness, and French *Values* divide its field between them. The group of idyllic artists, who promised at the beginning of this decade to do such great things, are dead ere they have properly founded their work or created a school, and no one has taken their place. We have no equivalent at the present moment for such art as that of Sir Edwin Landseer in animal painting, Lewis in Eastern life, and Linnell and Palmer in landscape, all of whom were painting ten years ago. We have no Walker, no Mason, no Rossetti. On the other hand, never was portrait painting so strong, or so little conventional. And never were there three living artists who could show a prouder record of laborious earnest work than can be shown by Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Poynter. I have left out of all account those artists whom the insolence, the eclecticism, or the indifference of the Academy has excluded from its exhibitions, but I should be giving a wrong impression of my estimate of English art, if I did not add my conviction that the painting of the so-called pre-Raphaelites, Mr. Madox Brown, Mr. Rossetti, Mr. Burne-Jones, and Mr. Holman Hunt, has been the most vital development of art in England during the last twenty years, and that it is to their influence that English painting is mainly indebted for the increased earnestness and truth which are to be found therein.

They have prepared the way for the changes that have come and that are still coming. They have struck a blow at conventional and costume painting, from which it can never recover, and they have shown the possibility of painting landscape from an entirely different standpoint from that of the old classical one. At present they look simply like destroyers, but hints of reconstruction are to be found here and there in their work, and at any rate it is something to have gained a broader and more worthy view of art as a whole—of its vitality, its meaning, and its beauty—than we had in the old days of placid and contented ignorance.

And as to the Academy—well, one is tempted to say with Beppo, “with all thy faults I love thee still.” The institution might be a little more liberal, and perhaps will some day; but, in the meantime, it is what we English people have made it—a genuine product of an inartistic soil. A trifle commercial, a trifle obstinate, and a trifle dull, but representative of the sturdy common sense of the nation, and identified with many interests and traditions which are not lightly to be cast away.

Note.—Here ends the essay which I wrote at Rome in the early spring of 1883; the notes which follow are collected from my criticisms written from year to year in the *Spectator*.



LOUIS XI
' SEYMOUR LUCAS. A. R. A.

1882 This year introduced Jan van Beers to the English public; and is so specially notable, in view of the frequent exhibitions of that painter's work which have since been held in Bond Street, and of the high estimation in which the artist is now held by a certain section of the critical public. Here is my remark, written at the time, on his picture *The Yacht, La Sirène*:

"In its way a very remarkable work; a perfect specimen of sensually suggestive French art. We say French, because the motive and style of the picture are entirely French (the painter is a Belgian). Taken as a pictorial expression of a page of Arsène Houssaye or Adolphe Belot, it leaves absolutely nothing to be desired. Some of us may perhaps think that this is hardly one of those *fair-seeming shows which lift the soul* up higher—but of that the Academicians are no doubt the best judges. Next year, perhaps, we shall have the original studies for the illustrations to *La Vie Parisienne* exhibited in the Great Room, while the Grévin sketches for the *Petit Journal* fill up the odd corners."

I had never before seen any of this artist's painting; but his subsequent exhibitions confirmed the idea suggested above. For it is distinctly the baser side of modern life, and the unmentionable half of the world in which Van Beers chiefly delights. His art is essentially caricature: caricature not only of clothes but emotion; he revels almost equally in elaborations of dress and undress; and it does not need to be a very strict moralist to feel a considerable dislike to his frequent pictures of little improper girls sticking their silk-stockinged legs as far beyond the limits of their frilled petticoats as the artist thinks suggestively desirable. It was a curious experience to me, a year or two later than the period of which I am speaking, to find that many decent English maids and matrons thought it the proper thing to frequent the Van Beers collections, for not only the subjects, but the motives of the compositions were simply detestable. The pictures were worse than coarse, and their prevailing characteristic was morbid indecency. The painter has lately, I notice, become a contributor to one of our newest illustrated periodicals, entitled *Pick-me-up*, and there the admirers of his work will find several choice examples of that peculiar art which has for so many years been a favourite with the Parisian public, and of which it now seems we are to become the latest exponents.

One is glad to remember that in this same year of 1882 the President of our Academy sent what might fitly be classed as an

antidote to the above. This composition he entitled *Phryne*, of which I then wrote :

“The President has done his best to escape from that slough of waxy women and brown-skinned men in which he has disported himself so long, and has given us a work great in size and execution, and almost great in intention. His *Phryne* recalls the painter of the *Hercules and Alcestis*, and is certainly the finest work he has produced since *The Slinger*. For on the whole, the *Phryne* is a great picture, though hardly a natural one, and crushes all the surrounding pictures for one single reason, that it is beautiful, and the majority of them are not, and the motivelessness is less irritating to us from the nature of the subject. *Phryne*, we may conceive, was neither very loving nor very wise, but a fine animal, and this is a very fine animal indeed, strong and glowing, yet delicately moulded, full of life and health, and yet with something of sculpturesque purity and dignity about her—a golden-brown woman, with slight draperies of crimson and orange clinging here and there to her soft limbs, and standing in a flash of sunlight against a blue sea.”

I have called it an antidote because of the purity with which Sir Frederick Leighton endowed his subject, raising the courtesan almost as much as Van Beers lowered his silk-stockinged lady, and the tailored ape of a man who hands her down the pier steps.

The President's *Wedded* was also exhibited this year ; a composition which has since become too popular to need description. Here for once he wedded grace of line to true feeling.

Mr. Poynter sent, too, a work rather interesting at the present time, a design for the decoration of St. Paul's, which was never destined to be executed : I criticised it at the time as wanting in simplicity and decorative suitability, and I believe that when the height and size of the dome of St. Paul's is considered, and especially the absence of light therein, the remark was correct.¹

One portrait of this year for old sake's sake I must repeat my delight in—the portrait of my old *Master*—the Master of Trinity :

¹ After ten years, the St. Paul's authorities have entrusted the decoration of the choir to Mr. Richmond, the first part of whose work thereon, consisting of large single figures on a ground of gold mosaic, is about half completed. And the same remark may be applied thereto as to the suggested design of Mr. Poynter ; that is, that in a couple of years the more delicate portions of the design will be wholly invisible *through smoke and dirt, and in ten years probably we shall see nothing but the golden ground of the mosaic*. It should be noted that Mr. Richmond's designs, though somewhat feeble and commonplace, are yet of simpler character, and so far more appropriate than the Poynter cartoon ; the least satisfactory feature of the present mosaics being that the figures do not adequately fill the architectural spaces allotted to them, but are, as it were, plumped down in the centre of each spandril, leaving the corners empty.

“One of those marvellous if unpleasant likenesses which haunt the memory like a too-persistent nightmare. The rigidity and dull immobile smile that Mr. Herkomer has fixed upon the canvas are wonderfully characteristic of Dr. Thompson, and though perhaps his friends might wish for a less stern reading of the character, it is a vitally true one. This might well be the man of whom we used to tell the story that when he was preaching to us in our chapel one Sunday morning, he looked round with a cold smile as he gave out his text on the Parable of the Talents, and began his sermon in the following words : *Now, you have all of you one talent* (a pause), *and some of you have two talents* (a longer pause), *perhaps one or two of you have even three talents!*”

The only other remarkable work of this season was the *Perseus Arming* : the first work exhibited by Mr. Alfred Gilbert in London, of which I may reproduce my criticism :

“We cannot close this notice better than by referring to a little piece of sculpture, which is in reality the most delightful thing in the Exhibition. It is called *Perseus Arming*, and is by Mr. Alfred Gilbert, a young artist who is, we understand, studying at Rome, and who should do great things.”

This work was not in the Academy but in the Grosvenor Gallery, and Mr. Gilbert's sculpture has since become well known to the public, and even, I believe, received notice from the press.

The second portrait painter I care to remember this year was M. H. Fantin, whose painting is entirely French in its method, and whose pictures have absolutely no attractiveness of colour or accessory to recommend them : they win what favour we have to give, by their sheer truth to certain effects of dull atmosphere upon the human face. It is a kind of winter-afternoon light, in which M. Fantin poses his sitters in their black dresses, against their dark grey backgrounds ; everything else is surrendered to what the French call *les valeurs*. The result is a strange and, in some ways, unattractive art, but one in which fine results of tone, and a certain unity of impression, are undoubtedly gained. These pictures are extremely subtle in their gradations of colour, and the work is such as to grow upon the liking, more than to arrest the attention. The effort of the artist is to combine a picture and a portrait, and in this process the dress and background of the sitter, and the light and shade upon the face and body, become of primary importance.¹

¹ I have some pleasure in remembering that, about this period, M. Fantin, who was entirely unknown to me, wrote to say mine was the first word of praise, or even sympathetic criticism, he had ever received in England. Well, he cannot say that to-day, at all events—for no one's reputation is more secure.

"At Burlington House this year there were only two works of art which are likely to live, as being of absolutely first-rate quality. One was a picture; the other a bronze bust. Let us take the picture first. It was by Mr. W. L. Wyllie, and was called, *Toil, Glitter, Grime, and Wealth on a Flowing Tide*, and showed a scene upon the Thames just below the Pool. The work was admirable in several ways. A significant bit of national life was depicted with truth and clearness; the power shown of combining an aspect of Nature with the doings of men, which is at the root of all great landscape painting; and the picture also succeeded in making a scene significant and beautiful without in any way violating the facts of the case. Mr. Wyllie had had the heart to feel and the brain to understand that in art, as in life, beauty may lie in unexpected places, and depend no less upon contrast than harmony, and so he had made the dark strength of his barges beautiful against the glittering sunshine of the unstable water, and given to the rough forms of his watermen the true picturesqueness which is their birthright; the freedom and power born of the sea and wind, and of a life in which action is bereft of uncertainty, though beset with danger. I can imagine no higher praise for this picture than to say that it might be worthily placed in our National Gallery as a companion to the *Old Téméraire* of Turner. It shows the life of the men who helped to make the tradition of England, and I cannot see why we should refuse that sympathy to the everyday labour and danger of the living, that we bestow so plentifully upon the vanished heroism of the dead.

"In any case Mr. Wyllie is to be congratulated upon his achievement. He has succeeded in giving one more disproof to the doctrines of those shallow, morbid sentimentalists who groan so loudly that modern life has nothing picturesque or beautiful, and he has painted a picture which, for truth of action, natural effect, and vividness of delineation, may rank with any painting of the present day.

"The other work to which I have alluded, is the bronze entitled, *Study of a Head*, by Alfred Gilbert. This is a very fine though very unpretending work, done with equal skill and sincerity, and instinct with a feeling for the antique, which is difficult to explain. The truth is, that Mr. Gilbert's work is like the antique less from the outside than the in. He is penetrated with the Greek spirit rather than the Greek form, and he is gaining from Nature and himself what the Greek gained from like sources. The chief works of

modern sculpture fail, as a rule, from being either too brutally, or, perhaps, I should say, too exclusively, realistic, or from being simply echoes of the work of the Italian or Greek sculptors; and the peculiar quality of Mr. Gilbert's work is, that it avoids either of these extremes, and that it succeeds in reproducing much of the Greek simplicity and unconsciousness, without imitating the mere outside form in which those qualities are displayed."

There was a small collection exhibited in this year at a minor gallery, which should not pass unrecorded. This was a series of terra-cotta plaques, modelled in very high relief, by Mr. George Tinworth, who was at that time, and is, I believe, still, a workman at Messrs. Doulton's pottery works. I find written of these in my notes of the year's art,¹ that—

"All of these were Scriptural subjects, mostly compositions in high relief of many figures, very rough and naturalistic in treatment, and full of a spirit of sincere and somewhat dogmatic belief. They reminded us a good deal of early German work, notably of such sculptures as those on the walls of St. Sebald's at Nuremberg; but it seemed strange to see the *naïveté* of the early Bavarian sculpture reproduced in the nineteenth century, and exhibited in a Bond Street gallery for a shilling. That Mr. Tinworth is a genuine and talented artist is beyond all doubt; that he is a sculptor who will or who could develop, we think more than doubtful. His very virtues will probably prevent him carrying his work any farther than he does at present; if it became more perfect it would become absurd; it is only while it remains childlike in its execution, that we can condone its simplicity of thought and its frankness of expression. It is a sort of Watts' hymn in clay, and would never bear elaboration."

On the whole, it must be said that this was a somewhat uninteresting Academy. The President's frieze was uninteresting, and, impossible as it may seem, almost awkward in its arrangement. Mr. Albert Moore sent nothing; and Mr. Goodwin, whose landscape is in some ways analogous to the last-mentioned artist's figure composition, did not show at his best in his *Enchanted Lake*, which was but a coarse and spotty reproduction of his former *Voyages of Sinbad*. I confess to have been personally very much charmed by Sir John Millais' *Grey Lady* flitting drearily up a dimly-lighted stairway in some old manor-house. A fine shadow of a picture this, very literally a nocturne in grey. There was, too, a splendid Millais portrait, that of the Duchess of Westminster, a fresh young English lady in a black silk dinner-dress, black gloves, and with a fan in her hand, turning

¹ In the *Contemporary Review*, from which also the first quotation is taken.

little more than a profile to the spectator. One of the best of Sir John Millais' ladies' portraits, absolutely lifelike in its reality, without in the least straining after effect. And if this was good, the same artist's presentment of Mr. Hook, R.A., was even better, and was the finest portrait in the exhibition, and one of the painter's strongest, freshest, and most brilliant pieces of painting. The old sea and sea-coast painter has been taken in his habit as he lived, in a rough frieze suit, with a palette on his thumb, and his face glowing as if it were fresh from wind and wave.

For intense cleverness—cleverness as distinct from genius—I think there was nothing in the '83 exhibition comparable to Mr. Logsdail's *Piazza of St. Mark*, which represented the evening gathering in the great Venetian square in front of Mr. Ruskin's favourite cathedral. Mr. Logsdail, whose later work is criticised elsewhere, has since developed his amazing power of realisation, till at the present day there is, I believe, no living artist whose work has so much apparent solidity and relief. His pictures this present year of 1892, chiefly of Venetian architecture, were simply marvellous in this respect. There was in one of them some painting of sculptured bronze, which for texture, and the management of its light and shade appeared to me absolutely perfect.

1884 This year is set down in my notes as a better one than usual, and the reason given is that there were in the Royal Academy "four works which are distinctly first-rate." Of these, two are works of sculpture and two are paintings, and three out of the four examples are by members of the Academy. The two sculptures, one of which is a smallish bronze, something under three feet high, and the other a life-size plaster cast from the clay model, are, without comparing their different methods, finer in their kind than the paintings; and one of them is so good that it alone would justify us in thinking this year's exhibition especially interesting.

As it is very much the fashion to go to the Academy and altogether disregard the galleries devoted to sculpture—a neglect, by the way, for which the behaviour of the Academicians themselves has been mainly responsible—our readers will, we trust, pardon us for asking those of their number who care for art, as distinguished from caring for a popular subject for conversation, to go, while their eyes and attention are still fresh, and they are as yet unwearied with trying to see a thousand pictures in two hours, and give five minutes' time to the bronze figure of *Icarus*, by Alfred Gilbert. It is not only the best sculpture in the Academy of this year, but it is an essentially fine work of art; fine for any time and any age of the world's history



Adrian Stokes

THE HARBOUR BAR

ADRIAN STOKES

From an original monochrome in the possession of the author

—one of those bits of truth seen through the glass of genius which enrich the world for ever.

We of the art criticism in the *Spectator* have been blamed a good deal of late years for seeing everything modern and national in a pessimist light—of being too cantankerous to admire anything. Well, here is something we admire to the uttermost—admire so much, that if we had our will it should be put in a little room at the Academy by itself, and it should be a condition, equally with the paying of the shilling, that those who enter the Academic portals should go first of all to see the masterpiece of the exhibition. Two years ago this young sculptor, who has been working at Rome for some years, and who before that was at Paris, had a statuette of Perseus at the Grosvenor Gallery, of which we then wrote that it was really the most delightful thing in the exhibition, and that its author should do great things. It did not need any ghost come from the grave to tell us that—it was, or should have been, evident to every one who looked at the statuette; but we may be pardoned for feeling pleasure at the accomplishment of even so safe a prediction, as of all perilous paths in art, a sculptor has perhaps the most perilous to tread, and, as a rule, only escapes from slavish imitation of the Greeks, to fall into the fascinations of Michelangelo, and leaves that master for the asceticism of the early Italian, or the voluptuousness of the modern French schools. Let us for once give due honour to a young artist, not yet too proud or too weary to thank us for our praise, that after a dozen years of unappreciated and unsparing toil, through every doubt of friends, every temptation to inferior work, every hardship of life—hardships such as only those of his own profession can understand—he has brought us out into the light of day an art which is at once simple, manly, and sincere; and which has, besides those merits, that subtle quality of style, that touch of creative power, that peculiar grace of mingled truth, and beauty, and insight, which we label conveniently—genius; a useful x which solves many an enigma.

Our readers would not thank us, probably, for going at length into the reasons why we speak in such terms of extreme praise of this work, and why we claim such immediate recognition for its author. The one is a technical subject of extreme difficulty; the other is founded upon the knowledge of how often a great artist has his powers crushed and his mind embittered by the non-recognition of his powers whilst he is young; whilst he yet, as Mr. Ruskin once wrote, runs his race through the asphodel meadows of his youth. But we may, perhaps, be forgiven for just saying a word or two upon the more evident merits of Mr. Gilbert's work. And firstly, from the technical side, it evidences extreme knowledge not only of the muscles and other anatomical details of the human

body, but of its capabilities—its strength, grace, and freedom of action. The difference between a figure which is graceful and correct in one position, but stands there for ever and is inconceivable in another, and a figure at which we look and see that before it was in this position, but a minute ago it was in another, and a minute hence will be in a third, is one of the great and essential differences between mechanical and vital work in sculpture. The latter lives—lives in that it is connected with past and future; lives by virtue of its affinity (unspoken but expressed, and realised by the spectator) with himself and all the natural creation; lives, perhaps, by the perception of a subtler law still—that law of change which is the law of life. In the conveyance of this impression of the changeful vitality of human life and action, lies one of the great merits of the statue of which we speak. Icarus is resting upon his right foot, the other just touching the ground. His arms, upon the upper part of which are bound the heavy wings, are slightly bent; the head looks downward to the earth he is about to leave. The whole figure is alive; and in another moment we feel that the wings will be brought into motion, and the boy will spring into the air. The sculptor has understood his subject thoroughly; the figure has all the slender length of lower limb and strength of arm and shoulder which we feel would be wanted for such a task. If any man might fly, this youth, with his strength and lissomness, would be the one. This is no made-up Icarus, labelled for the part, but a being of whom every muscle, and every detail of attitude and expression, tell his story. One other technical excellence we must just mention, which is the beauty of line which this figure possesses. Owing to the position of the arms, which are bent at slightly different angles, the arrangement of the wings, and the general pose of the figure, it results that from whatever point of view this work is regarded, the eye is met with varieties of different and beautiful curves, crossed, but not broken, by poise of head or line of limb. How enormous the difficulty, and how rare the attainment of this in its full perfection, can only be told by sculptors themselves and those who have given long time to the study of that art; but any one who goes to the Royal Academy can, in a measure, test the truth of our words for themselves in this respect, by comparing the *Icarus* with the other works of sculpture. And it is worthy of note how even Mr. Thornycroft's great work, with all its science and manly grace, fails in comparison.

We have left the consideration of this second work in the Academy, Mr. Hamo Thornycroft's statue of *The Mower*, a little too long to enable us to do it entire justice. It is inferior to Mr. Gilbert's work in two important respects. It is purely and simply realistic in its motive, rather than ideal; and it has, despite

all its grace and beauty, which are very great, some touch of that heaviness, that Britannic quality of mind, which dulls so much of our artistic work. It is strong, and graceful in strength; but it is not delicate, not dainty; it does not seem to have been wrought with the finger-tips, and touched lovingly from beauty to beauty till it reached perfection. From this there results some limitation of its artistic merit, and the statue lacks style; it is distinctly of a period, and its place is limited by the nationality of its author, his English parentage, his Greek sympathies. Just a hint of imitation rather than inspiration defaces the work. With all this, Mr. Thornycroft deserves very high praise indeed; his statue is the finest attempt to express modern English labour in terms of plastic art which we have ever seen; it is equally fine in its way with the two figures of the ploughman and his lad leading the horses, in Walker's celebrated picture. Mr. Thornycroft has had to struggle with great difficulties, and rather prejudices us against his statue at first, by having taken his mower's shirt off and suspended his short leather breeches round him by a single brace. It seems a rather strained device to show the pectoral muscles, though in the retired parts of England, no doubt, it is common enough for the mowers to work in this airy costume. But the position, the face of the man, the unconscious dignity of strength and labour, are all fine in the extreme in this statue.

Both of the sculptures of which we have been speaking are good, even great, works of art, of which England and the Academy may be proud. And we cannot resist mentioning here the fact that Sir Frederick Leighton was one of the very first to appreciate Mr. Gilbert's talent, and that we believe the present work of which we have been speaking was a commission from him. It is no mean honour to a man in such a position as that of the President, that he can habitually find time to help and encourage those young artists who might otherwise in many instances have sought for such aid in vain.

To pass to a very different work—a picture by Mr. Orchardson. On the whole, the *Mariage de Convenance* which he sends this year is the finest picture he has ever painted. Like all his work, it has many faults; the canvas is half empty, the painting unequal and somewhat ragged, the drawing and modelling harsh and unpleasant. Look, for an instance of this, at the woman's bare arm, which is, perhaps, the most prominent portion of the picture, and should certainly have been one of the most delicately and tenderly treated. It is like a badly-cut piece of stick; there is not the least attempt to give the delicacy, the modelling, or the transparency of human flesh. Little bits of the colour, too, are garish and unlikely, if not impossible—see the hue of the wine which the servant is in the act of pouring.

But to all these things we are habituated in Mr. Orchardson's work, and when the figures are, as here, on a smaller scale than usual, the faults do not tell so much. In every other respect this is a very magnificent piece of painting. Magnificent is the right word for it, for the picture is neither lovely, delicate, nor attractive in the right sense of these words. It is a drama of modern life, treated with Zola-like realism, but not touching those themes upon which his realism expends itself. It is at once a satire, a sermon, and an illustration upon the most common instance of society—the case of a woman who marries without love. And, to our thinking, the power of the picture lies in the fact that the artist has left it entirely to tell its own story, without the faintest hint of pictorial artifice to help out his meaning, and—that the story is told. The husband is not represented as especially old or unattractive; the woman, though beautiful, is neither very young nor very angelic. Two perfectly-dressed people of our modern world, there they sit opposite to each other over their dessert, while an irreproachable man-servant pours out the claret—and there one feels they will sit, and sit for ever. At least that for ever is the thought of the picture—the thought in the woman's mind that the loveless years will go on and on to all eternity. He has what he wanted, not being of a very intellectual or very exalted frame of mind, and liking his claret perfectly warmed; and she—well, she has what she bargained for. The story is old enough, but Mr. Orchardson has made it live anew. There is not a single detail which does not help the effect: the fruit on the table, the glasses and the plate, the care with which the servant pours the wine, the perfectly immaculate perfection of costume, and conventional air of the husband, and the traces underneath of the life he has led and the passions he has worn out,—everything tells. The picture is quite French in its unsparingness, its absolute refusal of surrender to the domesticities and the goody-goodyism with which we cloak our vices. After all, the thing is true. Let us have it in naked hideousness, and let our girls go and look at it; and perhaps some of them will one day thank Mr. Orchardson. For a glimpse at the other side of the moon, they can walk across the gallery and look at the fourth work which we have to mention to-day—Sir Frederick Leighton's great picture of *Cymon and Iphigenia*, hung, as it deserves to be hung, in the centre of the great room. The story is too well known to bear repeating, but Sir Frederick has treated it very much from the high-falutin' (we do not mean these words ironically) point of view. His Cymon has a rather fine, thoughtful face, and is clad in thick folds of scarlet drapery; his Iphigenia lies on a couch under some great trees, covered with a wide-spreading gold-embroidered drapery, while beyond is the deepest of blue seas, and the moon just shining above the horizon. This is at the very opposite pole of art to Mr. Orchardson's—lovely composition, and nothing else—and his

is nothing less than lovely; but then Sir Frederick's work carries beauty so far as to be justified. The colour here is full and strong, compared with much of the President's later painting; the head and arm of Iphigenia are delicious in softness, without having the pinky waxwork quality with which one has of late associated his faces, and the disposition of the great drapery about the woman's limbs, and over her couch is very fine. But it is as a whole we like the picture. This is not nature; we cannot imagine nature like this under any circumstances; but as a decorative composition of beautiful lines and forms, delicate modelling, and softest contrasts of glow and shadow, the picture is very fine and very beautiful. We can imagine no wall-space which would not be made fairer for having such a panel, and the artist himself would probably be the last to claim for his work any other office.

In connection with these Academy contributions there should be remembered in 1884 the *King Cophetua* of Mr. Burne-Jones, and the *Lady Archibald Campbell* of Mr. Whistler.¹ The former I have spoken of elsewhere—of the latter I wrote at the time:²

“Look at the portrait of *Lady Archibald Campbell* by Mr. Whistler which hangs in the large east gallery—a work which is of its kind excessively fine, and by far the best example of its artist which we have lately seen. Circumstances have rendered it difficult for us to write of Mr. Whistler's work without considerable hesitation, but we shall at least not be suspected of any undue partiality in our admiration of this portrait. We do not find it possible to take the artist's point of view—we do not believe in his conception of what painting and portraiture is and should be—but if we accept this difference, if we judge this work from its own standpoint, it is difficult to see how it could have been better. The drawing is delicious throughout—easy and masterly as Mr. Whistler's drawing can be when he takes the trouble; the tones of the black dress, and its colour and its relief against the dark background, are all good; the attitude and poise of the figure are natural and graceful, and the whole picture is fresh, powerful, and striking,—on the whole, a masterly piece of work, complete and good, full of distinct individuality and great artistic insight.”

1885 Was a year marked by the election to the Associateship of two artists whom the Academy had for years passed by. These were Edward Burne-Jones and Henry Moore. The latter had been the best sea-painter in England—that is, in the world—for at least ten years before this date; the former is one of the greatest artists of modern times, and had done his most exquisite work from 1865 to 1880: both when elected to the Academy were past fifty years of age, and only received election

¹ Both at the Grosvenor Gallery.

² *Spectator*, May 10th, 1884.

from those motives of policy which have always rendered the Royal Academy willing to recognise painters who became too strong to be crushed.

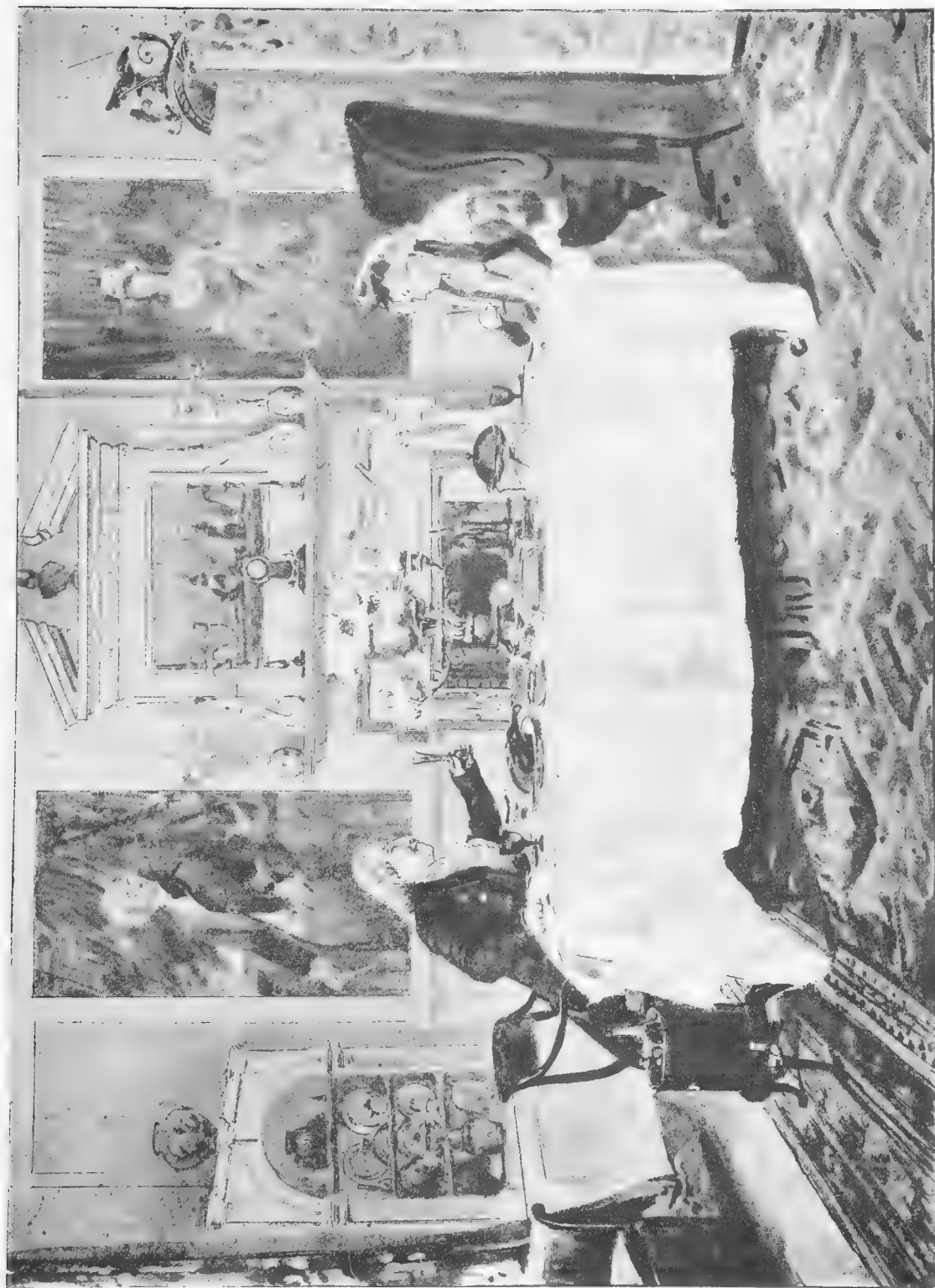
Another artist since elected an associate, Mr. Stanhope Forbes, sent a very interesting picture of a fish-sale (at Newlyn) to this year's exhibition. This was somewhat sneered at by the critics, who had not at that time become familiar with the words the Newlyn School, and who found it uninteresting, etc. Its artistic qualities, however, were very remarkable, and it appeared to me to be one of the two most successful pictures in the Academy.

"An interesting and pleasing picture. The composition is careful and good, the pose of the figures natural, and the facts of the subject are all there unbeautified, and yet (if we may make an apparent paradox) made beautiful. As a specimen of the best kind of pre-Raphaelitism, look in this picture at the painting of the various kind of fish that lie upon the wet sand in the foreground. Not only have they accuracy of form and colour, with just sufficient detail to make each one individual; but they have, too, that rightness of value which puts them in perfect relation and subordination to the rest of the work. The same may be said of the figures, the big boat in the foreground, and the fishing-boats at anchor in the distance. All that is in the composition is right in itself, and also right in its place. Farther than this, literal truth of outdoor effect could scarcely go. On this special subject, perhaps, the present writer has some justification for speaking strongly, as he spent last summer painting upon this very coast."

Mr. Stanhope Forbes was elected last year (1891) to the Associateship of the Academy, and his picture in this year's exhibition (1892) of *Forging the Anchor* received the most undiluted praise from the press—but in essential qualities the above-mentioned earlier work was far finer.

1886 This season's collection of pictures stands in my notes as a comparatively uninteresting one, owing chiefly to the number of absentee artists—Sir John Millais, Messrs. Herkomer, Tadema, Brett, Alfred Gilbert, E. F. Gregory, and many others were either absent altogether or represented by small or unattractive examples; on the other hand, there was the single contribution from Mr. Burne-Jones alluded to below, the President sent his bronze statue of *The Sluggard*, and there was a picture by Mr. John Sargent which aroused strong controversy—this was a portrait group of the three Misses Vickers. Notable, too, was the second of Mr. Orchardson's *Mariage de Convenance* series.

"*The Depths of the Sea*, by Mr. Burne-Jones, is a high, narrow picture, somewhat the shape and size of a shutter, of a nature to make



DARBY AND JOAN

DENDY SADLER

From „ monochrome executed under the direction of the artist

Mr. Horsley shut his eyes modestly, unless he has recanted his art lecture upon the undraped model. And yet it is, whatever may be its faults, absolutely without true reproach in this respect. No one who has eyes to see can doubt this picture of the mermaid, who drags down through dim, still green water her mortal lover, unconscious that he is dying in her arms, to be absolutely pure in intention and significance,—

“ ‘Habes tota quod mente petisti
Infelix.’

A strange picture in many ways,—strange in its colouring of tender shades of yellow-brown, green, grey, and purple; strange in cramped, twisted gestures, strange in mixture of human and un-human interest; strangest of all, perhaps, in curious mingling of great imaginative power, and almost childish simplicity of detail. The mermaid's silver tail, for instance, is fitted neatly on to her pale-yellow body as if it had been done at a silversmith's; and the floor of her rock palace is covered with hundreds of little brown pebbles, like the bottom of an aquarium. The picture does not look well in its position on these walls,—the work all round is so entirely opposed in character; and, moreover, while taking this into consideration, it is not, in our opinion, one of the artist's finest works, though it possesses many beauties.

“Mr. John Sargent's life-size portrait group of *The Misses Vickers* is in its way probably the cleverest thing in the exhibition. This is the *ne plus ultra* of French painting, or, rather, of the French method as learned by a clever foreigner, in which everything is sacrificed to technical considerations. The effect of a white dress or arm against a purple chair, the *value*, in short, of one object against another; the effective disposition of masses; the concentration of the attention upon the main point, to the comparative neglect of all the rest of the picture; the losing sight of the object of all painting—that is, the production of pleasure to the beholder—in the pursuit of *painting* itself, that is, of smart, clean brushwork, undisturbed from the moment when the paint was taken from the palette and transferred dexterously to the canvas,—all these are the marks of modern French painting, as taught by, say, Carolus Duran; and all of these Mr. Sargent has mastered, or is in a way to master. And yet, when all is done, what good is it? Could we fancy any one a hundred years hence caring to possess such a picture as this, where colour and imagination have really no place, which calls aloud for us to admire its artistic dexterity, but seems never to have felt at all that there was anything more in its subject than a good opportunity of displaying the painter's power?

“Let us look at a very different kind of art: Sir Frederick Leighton's statue of *The Sluggard*, of which so much has been said. Tersely told,

the subject is a young man stretching himself, the arms raised in a horizontal position, and bent double at the elbow, with the hands towards the neck, the fingers of one closed and the other partially open. The body stands on one foot, and is slightly twisted, in the act of yawning. The work has neither great merits nor very atrocious defects, though both its good and bad points are clearly marked. And first we will take the good ones. The attitude carries the intention of the artist,—the man is in the act of stretching, and stands only for a moment, as it were, as we see him. And there is great knowledge shown,—not only anatomical knowledge, but that much rarer knowledge of what we are accustomed to call ideal form. Certainly this is not a servile copy of any living model. Again, the figure has a merit which is very hard to characterise shortly, but which may be called the merit of style. It takes us back to great works of antiquity, and claims kinship with them. There are many other merits, but these may, perhaps, stand as the chief. What is there on the other side? If the truth must be told, all the objections to this statue may be summed up in one, which is, in truth, fatal—it is not a sculptor's work. By this we mean simply that the merits are such as might be possessed by the work in clay or bronze of any genuine painter who possessed the knowledge of form which distinguishes Sir Frederick Leighton; but, on the other hand, the shortcomings are such as no sculptor would tolerate or condone.

“It is almost impossible to define in words the great difference between the handling of a master in sculpture, and of one who is practically only a tyro in the art,—that this is akin to the touch of a great painter is nearly all that one can say, though the result is to give the impression of life, of the various substances of bone, muscle, and skin of which the body is made, and especially of the congruity and uniformity of the whole. Look at Hamo Thornycroft's *Sower* in this Gallery; and note that, blundering in some respects as the conception is, yet the vitality of the body therein is felt in an entirely different manner from that which Sir Frederick shows. Turn, again, to the small, unpretentious statuette by Onslow Ford, which stands near *The Sluggard*; and the same thing, though manifested in a different form, is again visible. The body, throughout all its diversity, has a suavity of contour, and a continuity as of one organism; whereas, when we look at *The Sluggard*, despite great artistic qualities, despite style and anatomical knowledge, we find that we think of parts—of legs, arms, ribs, and so on. Again, dismissing this point, we see the painter's, not the sculptor's, instinct in the position. And why? Because the position is essentially very good only from one point of view. Looked at from right or left, the general form is unpleasant, in one or two places acutely displeasing, resembling that of an irregularly-planted cross, of which the long,

upright leg has been split into two portions. The head doubled up, and arms apparently joining it and the trunk, give a clumsy and over-toppling air to the whole figure ; and it is not till we get immediately in front or behind the statue that this is removed. This is evident, indeed, in some measure, even when either a back or front view is chosen. A defect of this kind is almost always visible in the statues of those who are not professional sculptors, and arises simply from the habit of thinking of a figure from the pictorial, that is, *one* point of view, rather than on every side. These are, we think, the most notable points both in praise and dispraise of this work, which is rather a painter's graceful exercise in another art, than a fine statue."

Beyond all question the most important statue of this year was Mr. Alfred Gilbert's life-size group in plaster, entitled *The Enchanted Chair* ; but I must leave this unmentioned here, as I have already criticised this artist sufficiently.

I think a good many people felt with me this year that the hanging of M. Carolus Duran's great portrait of a woman in a black dress was very disgraceful, when we consider the great reputation of this painter in Paris, and the extreme merit of the example in question. Certainly this was one of the best portraits in the Academy, especially if regarded from the technical point of view ; and it was an interesting experiment to stand in the doorway of the room in which it was hung, and notice how its vigour and lifelikeness seemed to obscure all the surrounding pictures. The more the figure was looked at, the more vividly truthful it became ; the slightly-parted lips seemed to be unclosing in the act of speech ; the little foot, in its delicate shoe and silk stocking, was tapping the floor eagerly. A fine example of a great artist, which sunk the babies and sentimental damsels, Scotch landscapes, and classical futilities, hanging around and beneath, into utter insignificance. And there was a large portrait group by Fantin, also skied in this exhibition, which was beyond doubt the work of a master.

"This represented a group of Frenchmen, in black clothes, standing round one of their number, who is seated, playing. It is a large picture, and the figures life-size ; painted in M. Fantin's well-known manner, in deep, almost grim, tones of grey and black. The whole realisation of each individual is remarkable in its clearness, and in the apparent simplicity of the means by which it is obtained. The impression given by the whole work is almost purely an impression of reality, such as one might gain from looking at the actual scene ; but we find on examination that this effect is by no means obtained from a slavish repetition and emphasis of each detail, but from the painter's grasp of the

situation as a whole, and from his perfect mastery in subduing each portion into harmony with all the rest; for—and this is the gist of the matter—this picture is essentially a work of art, as well as a work of truth.”

1887 This year's is an April Academy, one of shine and shower, but as a whole bright with the breath of the spring and the early promise of the year. It is an Academy where the young men are doing the best work, and is so far full of hope and productive of pleasure. There were three specially successful pictures by the younger artists: the *Royal Exchange* of Mr. Logsdail, of whose painting I have spoken sufficiently elsewhere; the *Mariamne* of Mr. Waterhouse, who had just been made A.R.A.; and the *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* of Mr. John Sargent, whose life-size portrait of the Misses Vickers had been in the previous Academy probably the cleverest thing in the exhibition. *Carnation*, etc., showed us two fair-haired children surrounded by tall lilies and other flowers, lighting Chinese lanterns in a garden.

“The time is that of a summer's evening; the attempt has been to show the conflict of lights between the fading day and the (illuminated) lanterns, and its effect upon the various coloured flowers—carnation, lily, lily, and rose. Had Mr. Sargent only succeeded in rendering this effect truthfully as a study, he would have done a supremely difficult thing, and would have deserved high praise for technical success; but he has done far more—he has succeeded in painting a picture which, despite the apparent bizarrerie of the subject, despite the audacious originality of the treatment, is purely and simply beautiful as a picture. The introduction and painting of the children's figures, the disposition of the masses of flowers and leaves with which they are surrounded, the delicately bold colouring of the roses, carnations, and lilies,—in all of these respects is this picture an exquisite work of art. And even now we have left some chief merits untold, and must leave them undescribed. For how is it possible to describe in words that subtle rendering of brilliance and shadow, that united mystery and revelation, which render this composition so admirable? Honour to the young artist who has succeeded in combining, as we at least have never yet seen combined in a painting of this impressionist school, truth of effect and beauty of colour; who has given us in the little world of his picture the subtle mingling of fact and fancy which exists in every great work of art, and renders its subject freshly beautiful, while leaving its details true.”

Subsequently, this painting was purchased by the Trustees of the Chantrey Fund, who have, on six or seven other occa-

sions, been kind enough, with more or less delay, to corroborate, by purchase, my opinion of the meritorious work of the younger artists. I mention this fact with the more pleasure, because I am tolerably certain that the Trustees did not make these purchases from any special desire to substantiate my judgment—for which, indeed, I have reason to believe they have a most wholesome and unbounded contempt—and therefore the compliment is as valuable as unintentional. It is quite true that these purchases were accompanied in nearly every instance by those of other paintings of, naturally, far greater importance—and value, from the easels of the Academicians themselves, which I could not have conscientiously recommended, but this fact is easily explicable.

From a twilit garden to the crowded circus in front of the Royal Exchange is an abrupt transition, but the latter formed the subject of the cleverest (not the best) picture in this year's exhibition. This was by Mr. Logsdail, subsequently mentioned, and was a marvellous piece of dexterous handling and keen perception. Clever, too, in the extreme was the *Mariamne* of Mr. Waterhouse (recently elected to the Associateship), though the intellectual aspect was but thinly dramatic. A Sarah Bernhardt conception of the scene, the tragedy of a *star* actress surrounded by lay figures. Mr. Herman Herkomer had a fine portrait of his uncle, the Professor of that name; and Frank Holl—now, alas! to exhibit no more—a very delightful one of Mr. W. S. Gilbert, the dramatist; and perhaps best of all was Professor Herkomer's *Briton Riviere, R.A.*, admirable as a likeness, dignified and characteristic, and painted in a masterly, unaffected manner. Herkomer, I think, never shows to such advantage as in his best portraits. Of course Mr. Henry Moore had a fine seascape with tumbling masses of blue water and a great expanse of cloudy sky. Messrs. Bartlett and Stanhope Forbes were well represented; Mr. MacWhirter sent a fresh sketchy impression of a Highland Loch; and Mr. Ernest Crofts had a *Retreat from Moscow* sufficiently good to make us think how much better Meissonier had done it before him. I liked the big Hook landscape this year very much: it was Hook at his best doing what all our old landscapists used to do, *i.e.* painting a picture instead of making a study. The Royal Academy, however, does not care for such work, so we must content ourselves with Colin Hunter, Peter Graham, Leader, and Davis, and their scenic effects for the future. It was in this year that, thinking bitterly of what English landscape had been in the days of Cox and De Wint, Nasmyth and Muller, Turner and Linnell, William Collins and Barret, I perpetrated the following atrocious parody, my first and last attempt at rhymed criticism. It was supposed to be written a few years later when the special vogue of the painters named had passed away.

A BALLADE OF DEAD ACADEMICIANS¹

(A.D. 1890)

I

*TELL me now in what hidden way is
Every R.A. we used to know, man ?
Hindoo Prinsep, and sturdy Davis,
And veteran Cooper, the life-size-Cow-man ?
Where is Eyre-Crowe, who paints like no man,
"Sunset Leader," and Herbert drear ?
He whose models were scarcely human ;
But where are the daubs of yester-year ?*

II

*"Kid-glove Fred," like an Amaryllis,
With fluent phrases and flowing curls,—
"Childe Morris," who better known as "Phil" is,
And Sant, the painter of bronze-boot girls ?
Where's purist Horsley, who casts his pearls
Of wisdom (?) vainly in student's ear ?
O shade of Titian ! my memory whirls
In quest of the daubs of yester-year.*

III

*Where's Peter Graham, who leads the van
Of cannie Scotchmen, through mist and moor ?
MacWhirter, Pettie, and all their clan ;
And Colin the Hunter, who haunts the shore ?
Can it be that their days are o'er,
Praise departed and garlands sere ;
That we shall see on the line no more
Such fine old daubs as in yester-year ?*

L'ENVOI

*"Yes, never again at festive board
Will they list to praises from Prince and Peer,
But only this whisper, sharp as sword,
'Say, where are the daubs of yester-year ?'"*

¹ *With apologies to the shades of Villon and Rossetti.*



FRUIT-SELLERS ON THE GIUDECCA

HENRY WOODS. A. R. A.

Mr. Gow had this year one of the very best works which have come from his hand—a garrison marching out with the honours of war (Lille, A.D. 1708), which is the best military picture in the Academy. It is a work somewhat low in tone, the colour being chiefly in pale greys and buffs, and the figures are both numerous and on a smaller scale than is usual in Mr. Gow's painting. The chief peculiarities of the composition are the absence of clap-trap, and a somewhat methodical and almost commonplace conception. And yet the picture has that best kind of reality which makes the spectator feel not only that the facts might have been as they are rendered, but also that if they were, the scene was touching and beautiful,—in other words, they give evidence of the artist's grasp on reality and beauty.

The painter has seen the poetry of his chosen piece of life, and its capabilities of awakening unstrained emotion, and has set down the poetry for us on his canvas in legible language. To the best of our recollection, Mr. Gow has painted nothing so good as this since his *Relief of Leyden*, about ten years ago. Just above Mr. Gow's picture hangs one which has probably been more talked about than any in the Academy, one which forms a very complete contrast to Mr. Gow's work. This is the gigantic *Samson* of Mr. S. J. Solomon, a young artist of great ability, and perhaps even greater ambition. It represents Samson struggling with the Philistines, who have already wellnigh secured him, while Delilah (who, by the way, is of a rather commonplace type, as conceived by Mr. Solomon) shakes at him derisively a bunch of the hair which she has just cut off. Mr. Solomon has received plenty of praise for the pluck and ability shown in this work, and we should not have mentioned the picture in detail did it not afford a good moral to many young English artists in the strength and courageousness with which the artist has encountered great technical difficulties. We think that though Mr. Solomon may not be a great artist, yet that, if he has got the stuff in him, he is going the right way to become a painter; he is, as rowing men used to say up at Cambridge, putting his back into it: trying to overcome every kind of technical difficulty, and in the attempt overcoming very many. We should recommend those who are interested in seeing the result to which the contrary method has led in one instance, and is likely to lead in many others, to look at Mr. T. M. Rooke's little picture in the first room, entitled *Autumn's Pipe*, a composition of two figures sitting under a hedgerow, piping, surrounded by small flowers and leaves delicately painted. Now, Mr. Rooke is a genuine artist, and a good dozen years or so ago did this pretty, poetical, gentle work, which he is doing to-day. But he was too timid to attempt more than he felt to be within his grasp; he confined

himself to his little figures, a foot or less high, which he painted for the most part out of his head, and to laboured surroundings of leaf and flower, such as we have in the present picture ; the consequence is that now his work is nerveless, boneless, trivial to a most irritating degree ; he dare not do wrong, and has never learnt to do right. The contrast is an instructive one in many ways, for Mr. Rooke has what Mr. Solomon lacks—reverence, tenderness, poetical imagination, and a love for all beautiful things—and Mr. Solomon has the virility, the pluck, the dash, the atmosphere of life and effort, which are sadly wanting in Mr. Rooke's pictures.

Mr. Shannon's portrait is of a Mrs. Nichols, and shows markedly the influence of his French training. It is well drawn, well posed, and well painted, but can hardly be called pleasant, for, in consequence of a fault which is very prevalent in English portraits of the foreign school, viz. a tendency to exaggerate the shadows, the flesh looks dirty. The chief merit in this work, however, is that its aims are entirely removed from the conventionally pretty style in which our English portrait painting—especially of women—has so long been executed. Compare, for instance, with *Mrs. Nichols*, one of Mr. Sant's young ladies—say No. 275 or No. 312,—one feels directly that the younger artist is more nearly on the right track than the Royal Academician. Mr. Shannon's flesh-tints and shadows may get clear and brilliant some day, but no amount of change which was not entirely revolutionary could render Mr. Sant's portraits natural, or, in the true sense of the word, artistic.

1888 This was an interesting year at the Royal Academy. There were a splendid series of Mr. Frank Holl's portraits ; a great landscape study by Sir John Millais, of which more anon ; Mr. Alfred Gilbert's seated statue of the Queen ; the *Captive Andromache* of Sir Frederick Leighton ; *Her Mother's Voice*, most sympathetic of all Mr. Orchardson's scenes of 'igh life ; and a wonderfully elaborate piece of sentimentalism by our popular painter *par plébiscite*, Mr. Frank Dicksee. And amongst the outsiders and the younger men, there were our old friends Albert Moore and Alfred Hunt at their best, Mr. Logsdail and Mr. Loudon with important pictures on which their excellent foreign training showed conspicuously, Mr. F. D. Millet with a *Love Letter*, and a portrait of *Pasteur* by M. Carolus Duran.

A glance at the Academy as a whole shows us that the chief strength of the collection is in portraiture, the chief deficiency in imaginative work, the chief mediocrity in scenes of modern domestic life, and the chief decline in the department of landscape.

Some of the portraits are excellent, notably three by Mr. Holl,

each of which is good enough to make a painter's reputation ; and we here take great pleasure in saying that we are too glad to find that the slight decline in merit which has been occasionally observable for the last two years in Mr. Holl's work, has this year been not only arrested, but that the artist in question has attained an average excellence higher than in any previous exhibition. The sitters for the three pictures in question were Mr. Gladstone, Lord Spencer, and Sir William Jenner, so that the artist had no lack of interesting subjects for his pencil, and he has done them justice. It is worth while noticing that Mr. Holl has this year discarded in some measure the sharp chiaroscuro effects—reminding one of electric light—of which he has hitherto been so fond, and adopted a quieter method and a richer scheme of colour ; and attention should be called, also, to the magnificent painting of the hands in Sir William Jenner's portrait, and the strength and solidity of modelling in the portrait of Mr. Gladstone. In expression, Lord Spencer's picture is perhaps superior to either of these.

Those of our readers who think that Art should be restricted to the representation of pleasant and mildly sentimental stories, will probably be much pleased with Mr. Frank Dicksee's *Within the Shadow of the Church*, which may be described on the one hand as being cleverly painted, graceful, and popular ; and, on the other, as being theatric and superficial, both in representation of natural fact and emotional feeling. This picture raises the whole question—which we have no adequate space to go into here—of how far it is permissible (artistically permissible, we mean) to paint merely for the purpose of catching the applause of the unthinking portion of the public. If a *plébiscite* were taken of the works in the Academy this year, Mr. Dicksee's picture would very probably be named as the most popular one in the exhibition, as was the case last year. Whereas on the other hand, if a *plébiscite* were taken only of the opinion of the artistic and intellectual visitors to the Gallery, it is probable that this work would be placed in the lowest rank. This is the subject : a fair-haired young mother leads a fairer-haired young child past the gate of a church, into which a monk entering pauses for a moment to look at them regretfully. The monk is in shadow, the child in sunlight, the woman in mingled light and shade, and above the child's outstretched hand, relieved against the dark robe of the priest, two butterflies are fluttering. Now, it is evident that the subject of this picture, though ordinary enough, and painted perhaps a thousand times before, is still a genuine and pictorial motive, and we may also grant, with a fair presumption of certainty, that seven out of ten uninstructed people will be, in the vulgar phrase, " fetched " thereby. Fetched either by the pretty girl's face, the pathetic glance of the priest, the fluffy golden hair, sunlit, of the child, or the pretty colours

of the draperies, the butterflies, and the rose-bush. So that we have here a man who can paint cleverly and draw adequately well, choosing a subject which affords him full ground for the development of his artistic faculty, and producing a picture with which the majority of people will be pleased; and it would seem hard if all these capacities and achievements did not make up a work of art. And yet they have not done so in the present case. In these days, when critics are so closely watched, there would be rashness in using the only word which could rightly characterise this composition, from an emotional or intellectual point of view, and calling it bosh. But though we do not dare to say so, bosh it is. Everything therein is really wrong. The rose-bush is a property rose-bush, the monk has strayed from the Lyceum Theatre, and the angelic innocence of the fluffy-haired child is, thank goodness, unknown on earth. The truth is this, that when a painter chooses an ordinary subject, which thousands have taken before him and thousands will take after him, a subject which deals with human feelings which are as old as the race itself, he may do anything he likes except one thing, and that is to be conventional. Mr. Dicksee has heaped together pretty things and graceful postures, and chosen a well-worn theme for the opportunity afforded him to arrange such matters in a becoming way; but he has not thought out his subject, nor has he found in it anything sufficiently new to warrant him in telling us this old, old story, in such an old, old way.

In this same First Gallery, Mr. F. D. Millet has what is probably the best *genre* picture in the Academy after Mr. Orchardson's. This is called *A Love-Letter*, and shows us the interior of an old-fashioned room at breakfast-time, with a crusty father reading the newspaper, and a pretty daughter who has just received her love-letter. The work is remarkable for delicacy of touch, both in the rendering of the subject and in its technical treatment. Fancy one of Mr. Marks' pictures, which had been copied and a little altered by Mr. Marcus Stone, and you would have a work not altogether unlike the one of which we are speaking. In these days, it would perhaps be thought a term of abuse to say that this is a piece of Dutch painting; but to those who, like the present writer, remember with pleasure the clear, solid, unhurried perfection of the old Dutch work, the term may perhaps convey something besides reproach. This is, indeed, a picture which you do not take in at the first glance, and one which does not pall upon you at the second. You may look about the room here, and notice the different things therein, and even be interested in their arrangement, and consider whether it is likely that that arrangement is the ordinary one, and how much trouble the servants must take to keep the old furniture up to such a state of polish. In other words, one is impressed with the reality of the things



A PORTRAIT

J. PETTIE. R. A.

shown to us ; a belief in their existence, and therefore an interest in their quaintness or their beauty. Nothing recalls the painter,—we do not feel that there is an easel somewhere on the premises ; no shadow of the white umbrella falls across the picture. Still, technically the work is as dexterous as could be desired, and shows a fine perception of harmonious colour, and a very clever rendering of subdued light. On the whole, an excellent picture, and one which, like all really good artistic work, will never be fashionable and never out of date.

Take, as a contrast to this, Mr. John Pettie's *Clash of Steel*, a street scene of bygone times, wherein a woman in a Mary Stuart cap is trying to prevent her lover from joining in a brawl. The picture is full of dramatic force of a certain kind ; but in our opinion belongs to a class of art almost the exact opposite to that of which we have been speaking, and though likely to be popular enough, and certain to arrest the eye in an exhibition, the work possesses no quality of permanence. One feels inclined to say, Yes ; that's a fairly good Pettie ; but we never for a moment believe that these things were so, nor care, indeed, to consider whether they could have been. And as the sentiment, so is the technical character of the painting,—at once able and careless, dirty and brilliant, successful and imperfect ; everything in it forced a little too far for the sake of effect ; action, colour, chiaroscuro, sentiment, all with their *z's* dotted half-a-dozen times, so that no fool who passes by can fail to recognise the letter. This is the curse of so much of our painting nowadays ; triviality enforced by emphasis, as of a child shrieking at some one who stepped upon one of his toys.

Let us look at a very different composition. Here is Mr. Orchardson's *Her Mother's Voice*, a quiet piece of feeling, and a first-rate piece of art, waiting to welcome us when we have escaped from the solid rose-showers of Mr. Alma-Tadema's *Heliogabalus*, or grown tired of listening to Mr. Armitage's very prosaic *Siren* ; a maid who surely would never have tempted Ulysses, his master-mariners, and not even the little cabin-boy. Mr. Orchardson's picture has been sufficiently described ; we need not linger over the details. I would only ask my readers to consider this picture with reference to the work by Mr. Dicksee of which I just now spoke. For here, too, is a well-worn theme—a daughter singing to her widowed father one of her mother's songs. We might have had here, too, any amount of property surrounding, and prettily-contrasted light and shade, and graceful poses, and general *bric-à-brac*, had the painter so wished. This artist, however, was thinking of other things. We might almost fancy that he had forgotten how to compose a picture, if, on looking at his work, we cared to remember

that such a thing as artistic composition existed ; and what could be more stupid, from the point of view of cheap melodrama, than to let the girl be a comparatively insignificant figure in the background, and have the uninteresting old father in full light in the front of the picture ? Still, somehow we do not think of these things in looking at this work. We do not think of Mr. Orchardson at all ; we do not care a bit about him, Royal Academician though he be ; but we do wonder about the girl and her fate in after years, and are more than a little sorry for the father, and enter into his feelings and his memories, and all that long dead drama which is over now for him, as everything, in Thackeray's words, is over in life ; as flowers and fury, and pride and passion are over.

As (I believe) the first writer in England who mentioned favourably Mr. Gilbert's work, and predicted his fame, I may perhaps take a legitimate pride in his magnificent achievement of this year, when all men speak well of him, and he can write A.R.A.¹ after his name. Royal patronage (or at all events royalties for subject-matter) is apt to try an artist's capacities to the utmost : witness the Jubilee coinage, and the statues of the Queen and the Prince of Wales which look coldly down upon the new Law Courts from the ancient site of Temple Bar. But Mr. Gilbert has been, not superior—that of course would be impossible—but equal to his occasion. The good people of Winchester in the year of Jubilee decreed a statue to the Queen, to adorn the market-place of that ancient and loyal city, and chose Mr. Gilbert to execute the same. He has justified the choice to the fullest extent. It may be doubted whether a finer out-of-door statue has been executed during the present generation. Speaking personally, none that I have seen has at once so much artistic intention, so much reasonableness, and so much dignity. And to these qualities—no mean ones, forsooth!—there is to be added another, probably more rare at the present day than any other artistic grace—the quality of inventiveness. This is not only a *grand* statue, but a *new* one. All the details, all the plan, and the whole execution are alike novel, personal, and unforeseen. The very union therein of individual resemblance with ideal dignity is one which has rarely been attempted since Colleoni first shook his fist at the Venetian populace in the quiet square of San Paolo.² Like all other great original work, this looks strange at first sight. All art does do so that is not platitude in plastic form. One queries the propriety of being at once so realistic and so ideal ; we fret at the delicate detail here, we revolt from the breadth of treatment there. In one breath

¹ Or more strictly A., for the Royal Academy have substituted that for the more significant initials, thinking, I understand, that the single initial is more befitting the Associate, in the same way that this body describes its full-fledged members as Esquires, but only allows the Associate to be plain Mr. So-and-So, for which detail see the Academy Catalogue *passim*.

² More correctly, in front of the Church of SS. Giovanni e Paolo.

we say the Queen cannot be so plain, in another that we are sure she was never so dignified. Too much of a Queen, and too much of a woman, of what could the sculptor have been thinking when he modelled this Janus-natured Victoria for the good people of Winchester? So at least I fancy many people at the private view thought.

Well, Mr. Gilbert is a reticent man, and keeps his thoughts to himself as much as he can (for his work reveals many of them), but I fancy that he was full, not only of his subject, but of the occasion on which he had to produce his statue. A statue of the Queen was wanted, nor only that, but a statue of the Queen who for fifty years had ruled a great kingdom with honour, if not in peace. This was no occasion for beautifying, for softening the features of his model; the harsh lines which age, and thought, sorrow, and the cares of empire had written on the once smooth face, were necessary portions, necessary adjuncts to the personality which the occasion was to honour, and above all the character of the Queen, her womanhood, her individuality, were what the sculptor was set to commemorate. There once lived such a woman as appears here in this great bronze statue, and she was a Queen who for fifty years ruled our empire. So with no uncertain voice will Mr. Gilbert's statue speak to the Winchester people¹ perhaps for centuries to come, just as the Colleoni statue speaks to this day to the people of Venice, of a time long since forgotten. Thus much may at least be said with pleasant certainty: there are very few great sculptors, and by God's mercy we have got one of them in Mr. Gilbert; there is no doubt about the fact, and since having been made an Associate of the Academy has not deteriorated his powers, we may hope they are past the spoiling. There is probably one greater artist living, Auguste Rodin (whose work, by the way, the sapient Hanging Committee of the Academy rejected two or three years ago), but he is a sculptor of sterner mould altogether, and bears to Gilbert much the same relation that Michelangelo does to Benvenuto Cellini. For Gilbert's genius is essentially a genius for bronze work. Marble would fetter his hand and cramp his inventive faculty, which last is evidenced in bronze in a hundred quaint devices, and intricacies of thought and detail.

Worth noting is the fact that in both these men (Rodin and Gilbert) the spirit is not only peculiar to themselves, but peculiar also to their century. Rodin almost exactly expresses the revolt of the natural man against a century of over-fastidiousness, of corruption, of enervate civilisation; he strips the clothes violently, almost savagely, from his models; he discards the thoughts as well as the

¹ That is to say, if the good people of Winchester allow any portion of the statue to remain. Already I hear they have knocked it about considerably. The town council and the vestry disagreed perhaps on its artistic merits.

dress of to-day, and creates for us men and women who have a rude primitive grandeur of their own which owes nothing to tradition, which, so to speak, *shows its teeth* at the Academy, seeking for another truer, more human, more deeply-implanted dignity than any which has been invented by a school, or sanctioned by a precept. For Rodin of all men is least naturalistic in the ordinary use of that term; no man feels less the sensuous charm of the body, no man is more sternly ascetic in all that the modern Frenchman adores. Gilbert, on the other hand, if the expression may be pardoned, is a pure sensualist; the life of the body, of the flesh, the skin, the warm blood coursing through the veins, the grace of long limbs, of certain attitudes—these are the things which form the substratum of his art, and round which he weaves his most delicate fancies. We feel this even in the statue of the Queen; there is an almost unpleasant insistence upon the aged appearance of the skin, etc., and it is only his innate sense of form, and perhaps his long study of classical models, which prevents his approaching that perilous gulf of undiluted naturalism into which the best Italian sculptors of to-day frequently fall.

Sir Frederick Leighton's work comes next to this in importance, if not in actual merit; indeed, with all its drawbacks, the picture is such as no other member of the Academy could achieve, or (with one exception, Mr Watts) rival. The President's subject this year is *Captive Andromache*; Andromache, after the fall of Troy, fetching water for her Grecian Lord. The scene—did this strike the artist, we wonder?—is almost the Faust scene at the well over again, with a Trojan Marguerite, and affords Sir Frederick Leighton an ample opportunity for showing all his artistic knowledge. There is no need to describe the picture, since most of my readers are doubtless well acquainted with the work: but I should wish to say a word or two on what seemed to me to be the chief defect in the composition. The defect, that is, of knowledge trying in vain to do duty for spontaneity and life, of grace of deportment (such as might have been taught by a Greek Turveydrop) being substituted for feeling and action, of an absence of contrast, and of all those common, jarring, but necessary ingredients of life which prevent its being over-sweet, at the same time that they render it tolerable. For this is but a copybook Greece with which Sir Frederick is so much enamoured; life was not all cakes and ale in Attica, any more than in Clapham, and indeed, if my classical friend Mr. Sacheverel Coke is to be believed (and he knows more about these subjects than most men), a Greek damsel clothed herself in gaudy robes covered with spots, stripes, and chequers, made of good thick serviceable stuff, much after the fashion of that indulged in by the *bourgeoisie* of to-day, and even went in for tight jackets, those supposedly modern inventions.

However this may be, our artists know and care very little about the archæology of the matter, nor is it worth while to upbraid Sir Frederick because he does not put his Andromache in a tight jacket, or sow her gown all over with stars and palm branches, dots or stripes. But it is worth while to point out that a picture of this size and elaboration should derive its claim upon our attention either from accuracy to historical fact, or from accuracy to the representation of some emotion or action which is beyond the reach of time. Scarcely worth while we feel is it to drag poor Andromache from her two-thousand-year-old tomb to make her figure in a decorative show in which the first nameless damsel might have played her *rôle muet*. And the feeling is just; no one plays slow music save at the crisis of the melodrama, and this *Captive Andromache* is slow music of a pictorial kind.

Mr. Ruskin once said of another work by the President (then plain Frederick Leighton) something to the effect that it irritated him to find that all this grand straddling and turning down the lamps, etc., only meant practically an Egyptian lad shying stones at sparrows, and a similar remark is not inapplicable here. All this paraphernalia of elaborate gesture, of duplicate actions, of graceful poses, of careful composition, is only to introduce us to the merest *dea ex machinâ* of an Andromache, who attracts no whit of our sympathy, whom we shrewdly suspect of being only a *super* carefully trained for the part.

So much for the motive of the picture. On the technical side there is much to be said, both in praise and objection, on which I have no space to linger. The science of the composition is evident at a glance, and yet, great as this is, it is insufficient. The groups are composed together, and yet—the de'il's in it—they are like opposing cliques at an At Home, and won't mix. There are six distinct masses in the picture; indeed we might (with a little Irishism) say there are seven, and that Andromache makes a group all to herself in the middle of the composition. Worse still, she divides the work into two nearly equal halves, and has three groups on her right hand and three on her left. Much too might be said about the colour, which is discordant in several places, especially in the bright yellow robe of the woman with the child in the foreground, and in the crimson fez of the man on her right hand. And, again, it were scarcely hypercriticism to object to the fact that all the personages on the right hand of Andromache, are turning their backs upon her, the principal actress in the scene.

All these matters are faults more or less important, but worth insisting upon is the fact that the picture might possess all these and

yet be great, and justify the painter's commission. The true reason why this work does not do so is that it seeks beauty by the wrong road ; by the mere scientific addition of beautiful details. Almost all these groups are individually beautiful, but they injure rather than complete one another. Andromache's figure is also both elegant and magnificent, but the emotion she should have caused us is frittered away in the arrangement of her drapery, in giving a sculpturesque quality to her pose ; and so throughout the picture all is artificial, and is felt to be so of malice prepense. The painter has not *seen*, he has concocted, this subject—deliberation, not impulse, has presided over its birth. In consequence the labour is, plainly speaking, labour thrown away, and the beautiful incidents lead nowhither. This is no picture of a Grecian land where Andromache lived captive after her good days of Troy ; but only a decorative panel by a skilful artist who can do almost anything except allow himself and us to forget that he has learnt his business in half-a-dozen Academies.

Exactly opposite to Sir Frederick Leighton's great classical panel hangs Sir John Millais' only contribution to this year's Academy, *Murtly Moss, Perthshire* : a beautiful landscape *study* ; *not a picture*. I say not a picture, because it shows us the sum of one impression of Nature only, not the result of many ; because its beauty is motiveless, as if the painting had been done by a camera instead of a human hand ; because there is no evidence of selection of arrangement ; because there is no personal note, no completed (or even incomplete) idea.

Here is a very simple proof of the truth of these objections. Look at the work for a short time carefully and a strange sense of incompleteness—a deficiency of which we do not at first perceive the reason—comes over us. What is it that we lack ? After a moment the answer comes clearly ; what this study wants, is—the rest of the landscape ! What does this mean ? That the work has neither beginning nor end ; that it is a piece snatched out of the middle of Nature's storehouse. We feel inclined to cry *stop thief !* as Sir John makes away with his booty. Where, Sir John, is the rest of the panorama ? Consider this point a little ! We go to Scotland, or wherever it may be, in a railway train, and straightway before our eyes there flash a continual series of scenes from Nature as the train rushes on. Are these pictures ? Not a bit of it. We have no preference for one moment's view over another, unless it be that we catch sight of some little incident of rustic or urban life—a girl standing beside her sweetheart watching the train, a boy shepherding in the fields, some labourers toiling homeward through the evening shadows, or resting under the elm trees after their mid-day meal. For all or any of these trivial matters will, so to speak, identify the scene

with ourselves, and a quicker than electric interchange of sympathies takes place between us ; and though the express be flying along at sixty miles an hour, our hearts have outstripped its speed, and are the richer for one more of those definite human impressions, by which, all unconsciously, the fabric of our life is built. I feel this the more strongly in the present picture because of the accomplishment of its painting. Accomplishment is here the right word, for there is a prettiness about the colour, and a finish in the execution of this work, which is akin to that of porcelain painting, and perhaps no more severe blame could be justly given to this representation of Nature than to say that it could be satisfactorily reproduced upon a china plate. Scattered pools fledged with sedgy grass and closed in by a belt of Scotch firs (which stretch across the picture), above which we see the crests of distant mountains ; a grey-white sky, with long ranks of horizontal cloud ; some reeds and flowering grasses which fill the foreground—such is the subject-matter of the chief landscape in the Royal Academy. Yes, that is the worst of it. Though it be a study and not a picture, though its execution is in its finicking dexterity but the apotheosis of a young lady's pottery painting, it is nevertheless the landscape of the exhibition ; and having spoken of several of its deficiencies (or what seem to me to be such), let me do entire justice to its admirable merits of light and atmosphere. Through these ranks of cloud, a soft yet brilliant flood of light overspreads the whole scene and bathes every detail therein with brightness and translucency ; a cool freshness seems to reach us from the distant mountains, driving away the mist which still lingers by the borders of the fir wood. The whole scene is as faithful, as it is vivid, in representation of these facts.

For the rest, shall we say with Swinburne that we can only get from a man what he has in him to give, and that we should accept that gratefully ? Only before Millais was Sir John, there were two or three pictures, not quite forgotten yet, called *The Huguenot*, *Ophelia*, *The Vale of Rest*, etc. ; and when I think of these, and still more when I remember those splendid illustrations to *Framley Parsonage*, and *Orley Farm*, which showed us English womanhood, and English manhood too, at its healthiest and best, then I grudge the painter of *Murtly Moss* his salmon river, his baronetcy, and his thousands, and should like to put him back on the Bloomsbury back floor where he painted the pictures which moved the heart of a nation. He might be as pre-Raphaelite as he pleased, or the reverse ; the manner of the execution was not the essence of the matter. The essence of the matter was that the heart within the man was beating responsive to a genuine feeling—that he was expressing himself ; saying much, and saying it definitely and truly. To-day he is expressing nothing but his power of painting.

Mr. Blair Leighton's work¹ has been inserted here less for the intrinsic merit of the picture than because this artist is one of those who have seemed to me to bring to the study of painting qualities of earnestness and worthiness of aim such as are very rare amongst our younger men.

It is a relief to find a capable artist of the younger generation who is not led away by the flashy dexterities of the French school, who does not leave his work half finished to show how dexterously he laid on the paint, who does seek for adequate subjects, and when he has found them shirks no difficulty which lies in his way.

Mr. Alma-Tadema's painting is in actual handicraft the most accomplished in the Academy, and his knowledge of the subjects he treats—or rather of the hard facts on which these subjects depend for their pictorial realisation—is enormous, but I think in no other country than ours would he have risen to such eminence of fame, amongst painters as well as laymen. No French artist would care very greatly for his work, if only for its *Gothic* character; its stolidity would offend a Gaul, as much as it delights us Anglo-Saxons. In the permanence of these marble pillars, in the clear-cut detail of each patterned robe, chased cup, or carved sofa, we English people find fresh material for admiration and fresh food for discussion; but accomplished painter, scientific draughtsman, learned student though he be, Mr. Alma-Tadema is in some artistic matters merely as a boy playing at marbles. Look in imagination at the single work he contributes this year, *The Roses of Heliogabalus*. It does not need to be a very profound student of ancient history to have some recollections evoked by the name of the cruel wanton boy whose brief reign of mingled folly and debauch was fitly closed by the swords of the legionaries. Not perhaps the most edifying of subjects for a great painter, even if rightly understood, but at all events one which might have made a grand picture, not without a stern moral lesson. But Mr. Tadema has treated it in another fashion, as a good decent father of a family who pays his butcher and baker with due regularity might be expected to conceive the scene. A group of carefully-posed figures round the couch of the emperor, who looks placidly down on the scene below him; the foreground is filled with a tumbling mass of rose leaves, which fall not singly but in great solid lumps, as if they had been stuck together for the purpose. Amidst these are seen here and there

—rari nantes in gurgite vasto—

the heads and arms of guests who have been submerged beneath this flood of roses; a corner of the velarium, with a broken rope

¹ Reproduced on the opposite page.



ON THE TEMPLE STEPS
E. J. POYNTER, A. R.

attached, shows how the shower has been achieved. This is but a *Whiteley* kind of Heliogabalus—an emperor of furniture and *bric-à-brac*, and his revelry that of a schoolboy's play. I do not here enter into the wider question, whether it is artistically ever permissible to Bowdlerise a subject for the sake of the *cheek of the young person*; but there is no doubt that there are some subjects which you cannot Bowdlerise without extinguishing their meaning altogether. If you must paint Heliogabalus, at least paint what that name implies if you want intelligent people to believe in your work. Give us the luxury, the recklessness, the mad, lustful impression of this debauch which you have selected from all subjects in heaven and earth to expend your powers upon; and *then*, Mr. Tadema, when you have got at the heart of your subject, and set it down in those clear accents which we all know so well, we will say whether the beauty of the scene or the meaning of the lesson has justified you artistically or morally (or both) in ferreting out the most disreputable of Roman emperors, and bringing him back to earth on the walls of Burlington House. But you must be single-minded; no one with any artistic feeling will accept such a subject as this because of the excuse it affords you for painting a mass of blossom. The picture is therefore a failure, rightly considered; it just touches the fringe of its supposed subject, but in reality its motive is to be found in the superficial details rather than the essentials of the scene, for the essentials are—absent.

Our greatest portrait painter, Mr. Watts, is practically unrepresented this year, but his honours are worn very worthily by another artist whose work has this year surpassed itself, and, as far as the exhibition at Burlington House is concerned, distanced all its competitors. Never has Mr. Frank Holl painted so well, with such an entire absence of affectation, with so much power and dignity, and in such good colour. The work of this artist has for the most part been a little extravagant in pose and gesture, a little forced in its vivid contrasts of light and shade; but now there is nothing of all this, and of the two best portraits, those of Mr. Gladstone and Earl Spencer,¹ not a word can be said—or at all events shall be said here—which is not a word of praise. The *Spencer* is the finest picture, the *Gladstone* the most noble portrait, and indeed with such a subject the painter might well be successful. Mr. Holl had a hard task; Sir John Millais had painted Mr. Gladstone in one of his happiest veins, and had made a most beautiful, impressive, and delightful picture. In the respect of colour Mr. Holl's work cannot rival this, but in the solidity with which the head is modelled, and the penetration with which the painter has expressed the sitter's character, I prefer the present work. Indeed, the painting of this

¹ Perhaps the portrait of Sir William Jenner should also be classed with these.

head is a masterpiece, and makes everything around it look weak, sketchy, and coarse.

The picture on the opposite page¹ is the best that Mr. Logsdail has as yet painted, and if he were to sit down and consider it as a stranger, it might work a revolution in his art; and this for the reason that the faults, the wrong tendencies of his painting, are here seen upon the surface, equally with his merits, and a child can mark that the picture is at once coarse and clever, true and uninteresting, stirring and motiveless, vivid and tame. No city, least of all our London, was ever *quite* so prosaic as this, no passers-by so characterless, no light and shade at once so brilliant and so harsh. Said a friend to me as we stood before this work, If ever a photograph represents colour, that is what would be the result. But though the remark had a certain plausibility, it did not touch the root of the matter. Mr. Logsdail has tried hard in this work to actually render the scene as it was before him. It is an open secret that he sat in a kind of van by St. Martin's-in-the-Fields (by the kind permission of the police) through half this cheerful spring-winter, and he has succeeded in getting into his picture some atmosphere of a queer cold lilac hue, and putting his figures therein. A photograph (in colour) would prove him to be not right but wrong. The atmosphere has *not* this cold quality; could not possibly have unless the sun threw the same coloured light as the electric lamps in the Place de l'Opéra. But the great defect of the picture is its lack of sympathy, its want of poetry. The people therein are worse than lay figures; they are human beings in whom the artist has seen, and for whom he has cared—nothing. Now, we may allow that if a painter seeks ideal beauty of any kind—if his nature leads him to feel most keenly, for instance, the beauty of arranged draperies—as in the pictures by Mr. Albert Moore—we may perhaps allow him to neglect that rarer beauty still, the beauty of deep human sympathy. But if he paint us the scenes, costumes, and people of to-day—and I hold that these form his best and most vital subjects—he must show us that he does so because he understands, knows, and feels with them, that he sees in them, too, some quality of loveliness, that he does not take them by chance, and leave them with indifference. This is Mr. Logsdail's deficiency at present. I hope the time will come when he will turn his splendid powers of realisation to realising something which will make us glad, interested, or sorry, and not leave us coldly admiring.

¹ I owe especial thanks to this artist for his kindness in not only allowing me to reproduce his work, but for his taking the trouble to do a very brilliant black and white sketch thereof especially for me. I trust my very plain words will not offend him.



SATURDAY NIGHT AT THE SAVAGE

W. H. BARTLETT

1889

The sun has come at last, and with the sun this first Monday in May which is annually marked by the opening of the Royal Academy.¹ The banquet has been eaten, the speeches made, the graces sung, the patrons have purchased, the President purred, the Prime Minister patronised and promised, the Prince been present, the (well-behaved) painters praised, and the press has paragraphed to its heart's and pocket's content. All is for the best in this best of possible institutions, and so in his usual cow-like state of content John Bull stands in the sunshine happily chewing the cud of his year's art. And in these old Gray's Inn gardens as I write, the trees are budding fast, the birds singing blithely, and beyond and above blossom and song there rises the mighty inarticulate voice of London. How the birds sing, and how bright is the green of these first spring leaves which rustle against my windows! How tender are the shadows of the tree-trunks and boughs upon the well-kept grass, how beautiful the colour of those dull, smoke-stained old houses seen in the blue distance through the mist of sunshine! The broad paths have been swept and garnished, the benches fresh painted, and beneath the window there are strolling idly two friends—college chums, I fancy, from little intangible signs and gestures—of whom one wears a long black clerical coat and the orthodox tall hat, whilst the other has anticipated the summer, in light tweed suit and a brown wideawake. Their footsteps loiter beneath the window, and their young voices, fresh, insistent, and eager, float up to me. They are dreaming, planning the future; the world is opening out before them, and there is not a note of bird or a whisper of the great city voice which does not suggest to them a fancy or inspire them with a hope. Oh! my Posthumus, how the years go by! Thirteen have passed since I first sat in Gray's Inn writing notes on the Royal Academy with great hopes of what I would do, or help in doing, for English art and artists in the coming years. This, and that, and the other good thing should be done. How well I remember the self-made promises; how all the dreams come back to-day, and the ghost of that long dead first *press view* at Burlington House rises before me. Is it conceivable that any human being should be proud of the post of art critic?² Well, I was that day, and am conscious now that I betrayed myself thoroughly to the keen-eyed porter, who, noticing a new face, keenly scrutinised my admission ticket. We grew to be great friends, this functionary and myself, though we never recognised each other except upon this annual occasion, and a certain little ceremony of a pecuniary nature somehow grew into observance between us, accompanied by the following

¹ Part of an article written for the *Universal Review*.

² "No," say Messrs. Andrew Lang and Spielmann, and they are officially art critics, and ought to know.

profoundly original dialogue, which I reproduce here as typically English :—

“Good morning, sir. Another year gone, sir.”

“Yes. How are you getting on?”

“Little rheumatism, sir,—thank you, sir.”

Such, sometimes varied by the nature of his complaint, was our conversation till it changed to—

“Good morning, sir.”

“Hullo! You're not my old friend.”

“No, sir.”

“Where is he, then?”

“He was pensioned last year. He's quite comfortable, sir. I spent most of my last holiday with him.”

So the red official gowns change owners, and the faces we know slip one by one away, till we stand in a world we scarcely recognise, and look vainly round for a face, even of an enemy, which belongs to the time of our hot youth.

All of which, I confess, has little enough to do with the Royal Academy Exhibition, which grows yearly green as the spring-time grass, and is oblivious of all persons of such low degree as journalists and critics, save on one day of the year. It is matter of public history now that these last inferior persons (I am glad to say that I anticipated the result, and refused to sign the humble petition) had the presumption to beg the Academicians to allow them a second day on which to do their work, pleading the absurd excuse that they could not give careful consideration to 2196 works of art in a single day. “Absurd!” replied the Academicians with one voice—“utterly absurd! You need not look at them. You've only to write about them, and if you'll come to our studios beforehand we'll tell you what to say.” So nowadays all the good little critics go and learn their lessons beforehand, and the dignity of art is much advanced thereby. Also, there is avoided by this ingenious arrangement much of that unpleasantness which results from the writer's imperfect apprehension of the merits of the work of art on which he discourses, and the public gains the inestimable advantage of hearing the Titians and Michelangelos of the nineteenth century sing their own praises, though, with touching modesty, the singer for the most part conceals his identity.

Few people outside the artist world recognise how much the art of landscape painting in England has suffered from the practical boycott which is placed upon water-colour art by the Royal Academy, and especially from the substitution of foreign methods and foreign art ideals for those of our own country. Although in the earlier

years of this century we led the world in this art, we have allowed it to perish from amongst us in order to enable our young artists to produce third-rate copies of the work which is done at Barbizon or Grès, or in the lofty studios which look down upon the Seine. English art has not been good enough for us Englishmen, forsooth! —the art of Gainsborough and Bonington, Constable and Wilkie, of “Old Crome” and Cox, of Turner and De Wint, of Nasmyth and Richard Wilson and William Collins, of Stanfield and David Roberts, and, in our own day, of George Fripp, Samuel Palmer, J. W. North, Thomas Collier, H. G. Hine, Alfred Hunt, and last, not least, James Aumonier. So when the tottering feet of our students have learnt the first elements of artistic progression, we nowadays find it necessary to buy them a third-class ticket to Paris in order that they may finish their education with Gervex or Duran; and finish their education they do, in the fullest sense of the term, for thenceforward they learn nothing; that whole art of painting, which took our greatest artists a lifetime to imperfectly acquire, being taught to this younger and wiser generation in a dozen or two brilliant lessons from a fat French model. Since this is the case, it was with the greater pleasure and with the more fervent admiration that I found in this year’s exhibition of the Royal Academy a landscape by Mr. Fred Goodall which possessed several of the best qualities of our older landscapes, and in which there was no trace of foreign influence, of eccentricity, incompleteness, coarseness, or exaggeration. The subject speaks for itself,¹ for there are few of us Londoners, at all events, who do not know the view over Harrow and the Surrey Hills which Mr. Goodall has chosen. There was at first some doubt as to the exact name to be given to the picture, and the present writer ventured to suggest that the title should be simply *England*, for it seemed to him to embody much that was distinctively national. The green fields with their grazing sheep, cattle, and horses, the shepherd and the peasant girl in the foreground, the great public school in the distance, the tapering spire of the little church on the hill with its famous memories, the blue hills and woods in the distance, the soft rainy brightness of the atmosphere, the rich freshness of the grass, even the long line of white smoke which shows where the North-Western express is hurling itself seaward—these seem to me to make up a whole not unworthy of the typical title. Mr. Goodall, however, quite wisely, no doubt, thought otherwise, and has called his picture—rather elaborately, *Harrow-on-the-Hill, from the field known as Polly Mandrill’s, Harrow Weald*. However, the title matters but little. What does matter, is that every one will *feel* this to be England, though it does not chance

¹ By the great kindness of the artist, I am enabled to give in my quarto edition a faithful reproduction of this beautiful work in the autotype facing this page, which has been made from a monochrome oil painting, specially executed for me by Mr. Goodall.

to be called so ; and is it not a pleasant thing to find that this veteran painter, who has spent all his youth and prime of artistic manhood in painting the scenery and traditions of Arabia and Egypt, has come back now unshackled in spirit, unabated in enthusiasm, and undimmed in eyesight, to illustrate the beauties of the land which gave him birth, and the fields in which he played as a boy ? If we could but see it, pictures such as this are those that Englishmen should love and English art encourage—they exhibit one side, and that no ignoble one, of the national life which has made us what we are. They are comprehensible and beautiful alike to every child, youth and maiden, man and woman, who walks through the gallery ; and fifty or a hundred years hence, when the English imitations of French method and sentiment which are so popular to-day will long have been swept away into the rubbish heap, people will come and look at this landscape, and other pictures of the same unpretentious, pleasant truth, and tell one another that that was what England looked like in those long-passed days when there were still green fields to be found within a dozen miles of London. Do not let me be misunderstood. I do not claim for this picture any vast amount of high artistic value. I do not think it to be, either in beauty of colour, or power of composition, or in strength, or delicacy, the equal of the works of the great masters of English landscape painting who have been named at the beginning of this article. The composition does lack, no doubt, the spark of divine genius with which De Wint or Turner would have endowed it, but when this is said, all hint of disparagement must cease. This is essentially a picture as opposed to a study—one which not only faithfully, but beautifully, records the facts with which it is concerned, and which has been wrought out, to the utmost of the artist's ability, face to face with Nature herself ; and so powerful is the influence of these qualities and this method, that to the delight of all lovers of genuine work, *Harrow*, etc., hung here at the end of the great room of the Academy, makes even the finer artistic work in the gallery seem by comparison stale and laboured. Mr. Goodall has opened for us a window in the walls of Burlington House, through which we see and hear—not the shops of Piccadilly and the rattle of hansoms—but the sunlight falling softly upon English meadows, and the sheep tearing at the fresh, sweet grass. This is a good object lesson for young English painters, a lesson in humility as well as skill, a visible repetition of the old, ever true lines of Longfellow :

“ That is best which lieth nearest ;
Shape from that thy work of art.”

Here as elsewhere the extremes touch, and for once we have that painter who should be our greatest—who perhaps *is* our greatest, if purely technical capacity be reckoned with—in an unwontedly

humble frame of mind, and doing, I had almost said unconsciously, his best work.

No one who has even the slightest touch of poetical feeling can pass by Sir John Millais' *The Old Garden* without experiencing both intense pleasure, and that touch of sadness which the sight of very peaceful, secluded scenes, marked with the traditions of bygone days, is wont to awaken. The story is perfectly told; not, some would think, a hard matter, since there may be said to be none to tell, in the sense that there is no hint of special incident or experience; nevertheless the canvas is crowded with memories and fancies none the less actual because they are only comprehended—perhaps unuttered speech is indeed the only form of language which is essentially true. And the speech of colour in this picture, and the association and arrangement of form, will, whether the artist knew it or no, tell to many of us the story of the lives which have been passed in the grey stone house which peeps out above the close-clipped garden hedges. Mr. Goodall's picture, with many merits, lacked the touch of genius which is to be found here. Is it not strange to notice that the whole inner atmosphere of Sir John Millais' work belongs, not to his later years of world-wide reputation, rank, and riches, but to those days when he painted *The Eve of St. Agnes*, and *Christ in the Home of his Parents*.

Fortunately there is in the Royal Academy at the present time plain proof of the capacity of English sculptors in a group which has more power and more individuality than any which has appeared since Alfred Gilbert first exhibited—this is *The Hounds held in Leash*, by Mr. Harry Bates, a life-size group of horizontal shape, in which the hounds straining forward have almost pulled their keeper to the ground, whilst he with one foot pressed firmly against the rock is just able to restrain them. The group is singularly fine, both in force and originality and in beauty of composition. The lines of limb in the man, repeat and continue themselves in the form and position of the hounds, and give a sense of unity to the whole group, at the same time that they satisfy the eye. But the pre-eminent quality of the work is strength and manliness. The nude figure is modelled boldly—almost roughly—and his face is strong: finely conceived in the expression of power, resolution, and struggle. How a man whose work has hitherto (at least so far as the present writer is aware) been delicate low-relief plaques could produce such a magnificent, heroic group *in the round* as this—a work which places him at a bound in the foremost rank of our sculptors—is a puzzle. I can only imagine that he has long been concentrating himself upon this group. If so, he has his reward, for though by no means perfect, his work makes all the other sculpture in the room look mean, lifeless, and small, and would do so to an even greater degree

but that the Hanging Committee, with their usual indifference to the merit of sculpture by outside contributors, have placed the group where it can only be seen properly from in front.

I cannot leave the consideration of this work without pointing out how completely Mr. Bates has fulfilled one great condition of fine sculpture, and that is the condition of making his statue look well not only from one or two, but practically from all, points of view. One may walk slowly all round this group nor find a single spot whence the lines are ugly, awkward, or insignificant. By the majority of English sculptors this condition is much ignored, and Academy sculpture especially has been habitually constructed to be seen only from in front, in a position exactly facing the statue.

Mention may be made of the fact that both the Academy and the press practically ignored this sculpture of Mr. Bates, in 1889, and until a year or two afterwards, when the same statue was cast in bronze. Two years later an inferior work of Mr. Bates' was purchased with the Chantrey Fund, and of course the artist made an Associate.

One painter was absent from the Royal Academy for the first time, to the best of my recollection, for the last twenty years, and this was Mr. Albert Moore, who could not get his great picture finished in time for exhibition. I saw this well on towards completion some time before the sending-in day; but the artist then told me he saw no hopes of "getting it through." So I asked him to let me have a little sketch, which I reproduce on the opposite page as a specimen of his slighter work—wishing to say once more, in this article, what has been frequently said by me elsewhere during the last dozen years, that it is a disgrace to the Royal Academy not to have made this artist an Associate many a long year ago. Those who remember such of his pictures as *Daffodils*, *The Painter's Tribute to the Art of Music*, the *Venus*, the *Follow my Leader*, and many others, will know I have the fullest reason for my words, in stating that Mr. Moore's quality as an artist of the highest scientific knowledge, of the most exquisite perception of the beauties of the draped and undraped figure, as a subtle, most refined colourist, and as a delicate and learned draughtsman, is such as to challenge comparison with that of any member of the Academy. And with all this he is a painter who has never gone one step out of what he considers the true path of art to conciliate the taste of the multitude or to enrich himself! If such as these are not men whom the Academy should delight to honour, for what purpose does an Academy exist? If the artists themselves, when they have the power, will not reward first-rate and long-sustained work, who can we hope will be likely to do so? For several years before the election of Mr. Henry Moore, the sea-



STUDY OF A HEAD. — ALBERT MOORE

painter, who was kept outside the Academic ranks till he was nearly fifty years old, though he had been acknowledged for twenty years to be the finest sea-painter in England, I challenged the Royal Academy annually in the *Spectator* to produce a single reason, good, bad, or indifferent, why they excluded these two men, Albert and Henry Moore, from the ranks of the Associates. I now renew the challenge on behalf of the former, only this time I ask, not the Council of Burlington House, but the people of England, to express their verdict. We all know the oft-quoted proverb as to the relative value of fact and theory. Well, against all the theoretical praise which has been lavished during the last week upon the management of Burlington House, take as a slight counterpoise the fact that they have managed in the course of thirty years to practically kill English landscape art, and that, of the greatest painters of the present generation, a large proportion of the best are either outside their ranks, or have been admitted to them grudgingly in late middle age, in order that they might strengthen with their glory the institution which had nothing but derision and neglect for them during their time of manhood and struggle. Such a course of action may perhaps be, from the narrow shopkeeper point of view, worldly wise, but that it is worthy of a great nation, and conducive to the progress of a great art, the present writer at least must be allowed to deny.

1890 The most purely artistic work of this year's exhibition at the Royal Academy, was to be found in the pictures of the *outsiders*—those artists whose initials are, like the hero's wounds, all in front. Of these, two contributions stand out as pre-eminently interesting—the one for having been painted by a young and comparatively unknown artist; the other for being the last of a long succession of beautiful pictures, one or two of which have for the last quarter of a century or so formed a chief element in the attractiveness of each annual collection at Burlington House or the National Gallery.¹ Of Mr. Swan's *Lioness defending her Cubs* we will speak later, and first talk a little of Mr. Albert Moore's *Summer Night*—a portion of which composition faces this page. Purposes of copyright frequently interfere with the reproduction of new pictures, and this was the reason which forced us in the present instance to give such a maimed presentment of the work in question. The picture, a very large one, hung in a corner of the fifth room by the door, in an extremely unbecoming light, and we may safely say looked as bad as would be possible under any circumstances. Still, the Hanging Committee (or let us say Fate, or chance) notwithstanding, the work, like all really great art, asserts its quality irresistibly. *Thank God for beautiful women*, said the old

¹ Perhaps my younger readers may have forgotten that up to about 1870 the Royal Academy had no separate building for either their schools or annual exhibitions.

Greek, and we may well echo his saying, and add a rider of recognition and thankfulness to the artist who can see and set down on canvas so much of the beauty of women as Mr. Albert Moore has here moulded to his artistic purpose—has woven into a wavering line of graceful gesture and lovely forms and faces, and surrounded with pale harmonies of golden flowers and snowy draperies, beyond which the moonlit sea rises softly - splendid in the hush of the summer night.

Look at this composition—remembering that this is only a fragment of the original picture—and judge whether the words are exaggerated, when we say that the *quality of beauty* in this work is the same as that which can be traced in a fine Greek statue; beauty, that is, which is independent of detail, and pathetic, dramatic, or interesting circumstance, but which springs from a deep understanding and love of what is truly beautiful in Nature, and of the power to so use that affection and that knowledge as to quicken them with the keener, newer, more personal life of art.

At the risk of being wearisome in justification, I venture to indicate the basis on which this criticism rests. We will omit all reference to what may be called the purely technical beauty of the picture, *i.e.* the selection of beautiful lines and forms, the harmonies of composition and inventiveness of design, and mention only the actual, so to speak the piece-meal, evidences of the painter's insight into the beautiful. Of these, the first—which must be the first of every worthy painting of the nude or partially nude form—is the sense of the mingled delicacy and strength, softness and dignity, of the human body. In all great Greek sculpture and design, and Italian flesh painting, we are made to feel first of all, chiefly, and in many instances exclusively, the beauty of the whole mass of the human body. Directly the Roman copyist or the painter of the later Renaissance days comes in, he begins to linger fondly over details and elaboration of the sinews and muscles, and delights in showing his knowledge by analysis instead of synthesis; but all really great sculpture or painting (or architecture, for the matter of that) is and must be synthetic. Analysis belongs to the scientific aspect of nature, not the artistic; and directly a painter makes us think about the *deltoid* and the *supinator longus*, he has gone a long way towards making us forget what George Eliot once called the infinite beauty of a woman's arm. It is strange that there should be in the drawing of the nude three distinct stages, of which the last and the first are superficially the same, for first the student draws his contours with but little reference to the bones and muscles which underlie and shape them, and then almost invariably he draws those bones and muscles so elaborately (compare, for instance, much of Mr. Poynter's most laborious and learned work)

that the result is more like a map of a human being than a true picture of him ; and lastly, if he has eyes, and perseverance, and sense of what is fine and subtle in forms, he begins to draw the body *as a whole*—the body, that is, of which contour, and bones, and muscles are but a part, and that in a sense the least important, most obvious part—the body which has not only shape but mass, not only members but life, not only facts but mystery—in which every form passes slowly, imperceptibly into another, changing like a great passage in immortal music, rising and falling in gradations as softly unmarked as the long swell of the mid-sea wave.

One old painter we have, who has grasped this finest rendering of the nude most perfectly, and who told me one day many years ago that he learned it first from studying Phidian sculpture, and I do not assert that Mr. Watts has not turned his knowledge to finer issues than Mr. Albert Moore. I think he has done so, since he has not stopped short at the realisation of beauty, but welded into it an amount of spiritual and poetical suggestion for which we can find no parallel in English art ; but with this single exception, there is no member of the Royal Academy, and certainly no outsider, who can even be mentioned, in the respect I am considering, of beautiful treatment of the nude figure, as a rival to the latter. Sir Frederick Leighton's name may occur to some as a possible competitor, but that artist's figures have never approached sufficiently near to the realm of the actual to be mentioned in this connection. The learned President of the Royal Academy has used women and men in his pictures as elements in his compositions, as vehicles for his thought, or his sense of the beautiful, but he has never for an instant sought to make us realise the soft, pulsating warmth of flesh, nor its infinite delicacy of hue, rugged smoothness of texture, independent life and reality, mystery, dignity, and significance. Thinking quietly over the matter, it seems to me that perhaps because he has *not* done this is one great reason why he is—perhaps why he should be—in such a country as ours, President of the Royal Academy ; but however that may be, the fact is certain, that on the delicate waxen surface of his graceful figures no blemish of humanity lingers even so softly as a falling rose-leaf—the people he creates, we feel we need neither love nor hate—they are not of our mortal nature.

To return to Mr. Moore's sense of the beautiful and speak of a merit which is at once less difficult to appreciate, and even less disputable than the first. After the perception of the beauty, and dignity of form and surface of the human body, there may fairly come as second in importance the conception and rendering of gesture, and here again if we turn to our illustration there is sufficient proof of the artist's power. The present writer at all events knows of few

more beautiful things in modern art, as far as the expression of unconscious action is concerned, than the pose of the hands, arms, and head of the sleeping figure on the left of the picture—the fall of the right arm across the body, and the soft clasp of the hand upon the drapery beneath, are admirable alike in the pleasure given to the eye and in truth to nature, while the upright pose of the left arm with the hand lightly drooping from the wrist, represents an action which is so entirely characteristic of sleep, yet so original, unexpected, and unstudied, that despite its consonancy with the rest of the composition, I can hardly believe this was not originally suggested by the artist accidentally seeing it. Similar praise might not unjustly be given to the action of the waking figure—though in this case the gesture depicted is a momentary one. One last special grace of Mr. Moore's picture remains to be noticed—the exquisite refinement, inventiveness, and beauty with which the draperies are arranged and painted. I have in former years so frequently pointed out and criticised this point in detail that it need not be dwelt upon here further than to say that the present instance is a fine specimen of Mr. Moore's skill in this respect.

If I have dwelt disproportionately long in the above paragraphs upon the qualities of Albert Moore's art, and the great merits which that art possesses, it was because I would once more lead readers to recognise and admire the fineness of this work which the Royal Academy have persistently refused to reward or acknowledge. Many years ago in the *Spectator*, and in even a greater paper, whose name its very contributors whisper with bated breath, I challenged the Royal Academy, or any critic or painter who upheld as impartial and adequate the administration of that Institution so far as regards the election of deserving artists, to give any single reason for the already long-enduring exclusion of Messrs. Henry and Albert Moore from the honour of Associateship. And I then pointed out, and continued to point out yearly, that the first of these was by far the greatest sea-painter in England (which meant in the world), and that the second was the only living artist of our country who could paint drapery adequately, was the greatest master of pure design whose pictures were to be seen at Burlington House, and was literally the only Englishman who was capable of treating the combination of drapery and nude figure with the true Greek feeling, not only for the beauty of both, but for the essential dignity and purity of the latter. As far as this could be shown in the half-dozen lines or so of a daily or weekly journal, I did show it by comparison, description, and criticism, and in the result my words, repeated during ten years, were never once challenged by any human being, at all events so far as the public press was concerned. Time went on, and at length, driven to the act by a more splendid sea-picture than usual, the Royal Academy

Council did, after twenty years'¹ delay, elect the first of these brothers, but the second, and, on the whole, the greater artist, remains still *outside* and has his masterpieces hung in a corner of a back room, lest they should interfere with Mr. Cooper's Cows, or the bronze-boot girls with which Mr. Sant, R.A., still gladdens the heart of the British matron.

These are the things which make us despair of English art, of English taste, and of English justice. Can we not yet *see*, for all our South Kensington Museums? Is there nobody who cares to give his due to a great artist who works for his art firstly and chiefly? When I was a lad yet at Cambridge, Albert Moore was already painting the most beautiful pictures which were then being exhibited at the Royal Academy—pictures which were even more beautiful than his work of to-day, for though they were perhaps less absolute in completed science, they had that glow of tender feeling, that fresh fragrance of poetic suggestiveness, which can remain in age in its first vigour and delightfulness, no more than we taste the freshness of April mornings, in the completed glory of June.

I do not suppose he cares much now whether he be made a member of the Academy or no; he has won his fame and done his work, despite the long-refused recognition; but all lovers of art should care, for it is by the watching for, finding out, and helping of such artists, that English art will prosper, if it prosper at all. When they are great and old, what good can official patronage do for them? They can do good for it—as Ruskin said so splendidly long ago—can strengthen the body which, having despised them during their youth, desires to profit by the fruit of their age; but their hearts are so bitter with experience, their aims so thwarted with neglect, their aspirations so deadened with lack of sympathy and encouragement, that the too-late-won honour is scarcely more than pain, and they look at the sharp laurel-crown which we thrust into their hands, wistfully—with sadness rather than joy.

The election of such men as Burne-Jones and Henry Moore to be *Associates* of the Royal Academy at the age of fifty—after two-thirds of a lifetime of great work—is not only a farce, but almost an impertinence. The election may be accepted because painters are no less influenced by commercial considerations than other men, and the actual money value of an Associateship, or Royal Academician-ship, is considerable; but that does not render it less ludicrous and improper that it should be possible to withhold the honour for a quarter of a century from men whom the whole world knows

¹ Mr. Henry Moore had exhibited at the Royal Academy, I believe, even longer, but at least that.

not only deserve recognition, but who are absolute masters of their craft.

Let us return to the Royal Academy Exhibition, and speak of the one really fine piece of animal painting which is this year to be found therein. The picture in question is the *Lioness defending her Cubs*, by Mr. John Swan, a painter who, trained in M. Gérôme's studio, has long exhibited (and sold) in France and Holland, but who is comparatively new to the English public. Mr. Swan is one of the rarer species of birds—a *painter* who is also an *artist*—and who at present, at all events, cares more for the quality of his work than for its popularity or price. He is also *rara avis* in another respect, since he is both draughtsman and colourist—a combination as easily fancied as the mermaid, and almost as rarely found. That he is a draughtsman, his reputation as the head of Gérôme's studio may perhaps be taken as sufficient proof, for Frenchmen do not say men can *draw* lightly, nor is Gérôme likely to think highly save of an exceptional draughtsman: even the younger French artists who have decided in their omniscience (*de vingt ans*) that this old master *can't paint*, still grant him some little knowledge of drawing—but this by the way. Of Mr. Swan's power as a colourist, proof absolute is, from the nature of the subject, more difficult to obtain. I have known folk—some of them even (professionally) critical—who have considered Leighton a colourist, and compared in that respect, to the disadvantage of the latter, Poynter with Watts. Possibly it may be safer to say that in the same sense that Mr. Watts is a colourist, so is Mr. Swan—a master, that is, of whatever tint he depicts, choosing preferentially the darker, richer hues of the palette, and making even gloom of evening lustrous in his work by the variety and gradation of shadowy colour. If we may be pardoned a brief technical diversion on a subject which is frequently misunderstood, we would point out that even amongst those painters whose pictures are in colour pleasant—and rightly pleasant—to look upon, there are two classes almost as separate as those of the sheep and the goats. These are the camps of the colourists and the tintists. In the first of these are the men who seek not only a total pleasurable effect of tone in their pictures, but who seek from each tint employed therein the utmost possible beauty and variety: who consider such a thing as a *flat* tint—a tint which has been, so to speak, mixed in a pail, and then spread from one part of its mass to the other, with a big flat brush—as unworthy of the name of colour, and who seek to modulate, and, technically speaking, play into each colour, till it possesses infinite variations, unknown depths, and lustrous brilliancies *into* which the eye looks gradually, which only reveal themselves slowly, yet upon the perception of which the effect of the picture depends.

The tinter's camp, on the other hand, is the home of those who

treat the colour effect of a picture as they would the decoration of any plane surface, seeking for harmony by juxtaposition of various tints of which each individual portion may be unattractive or even ugly, but of which the combined effect is, either pleasant or significant.

Were it not for the passing fashion in art, it were scarcely necessary to say that the former of these methods is the more estimable, and has been the method of every painter of earlier days whom the world recognises as having been a great colourist. It is pre-eminently the method of *painting*, as opposed to the method of mosaic. But our digression is too long already, and with one last remark—that the French, broadly speaking, are almost universally colourists in the latter, and that the best English artists are sometimes colourists in the former and higher sense—we must leave this point to the consideration of our readers. Mr. Swan, then, is a draughtsman as understood by Gérôme, and a colourist as understood, shall we say, by Tintoretto (that is, that Tintoretto would have accepted him as in the right road). What else is he? Well, he is essentially a big man—a man who treats his subjects bigly—has broad and deep ideas concerning them—goes to the root of the matter. Practically our public nowadays—having forgotten James Ward, who knew as much as both of them put together—considers only Landseer and Briton Riviere as our representative animal painters. Landseer in the immediate past, full of sentiment of the kindly Jingo type, and intellect of the quality of a Macaulay ballad, but broad-shouldered, genial, and English; good-tempered, sane, and with a proper discernment between the merits of the aristocracy, and the lesser, but still occasionally admirable qualities of endurance, pathos, or heroism in people who are born in dimmer vesture than the purple; and Riviere, who wears Landseer's rue with a poetical difference, who is neither broad-shouldered (artistically), sane, nor particularly healthy, but who has hankerings after poetical, if popular, treatment of his subject-matter, who has read Omar Khayyâm in his leisure moments, and heard of Adonis and Endymion; and generally may be said to represent the sufficiently cultured sentiment of a more instructed day than that for which Landseer painted.

Mr. Swan's merit is to steer equally clear of both the rocks on which these painters have wrecked their art: as capable a draughtsman as Landseer, a better painter, as the Frenchmen understand *painting*, and an infinitely finer colourist, he has combined with his study of animal nature a sentiment, or rather a quality of sentiment, which gives to the beasts he depicts the dignity which is their own, instead of the sentiment which is alien to them though natural to us.¹

¹ Perhaps in much of this he has adapted or rather caught the inspiration of the French sculptor, Barye, but this is to examine *too curiously*.

Seeing and understanding that the tragedy of an animal's life might well be sufficient for the motive of any animal picture, and that there was no necessity to go to humanity for ideas, in order to, as it were, fresco the outside of the brute with interesting matter, he has been able in the picture before us, and will be more able as time goes on, to make his lioness not only interesting and pathetic in her suffering; but even grand and terrible. This is no tame beast, we feel, who has spent her life in cages at the "Zoo," and looked into so many bun-laden human beings' eyes that she has forgotten the jungles and deserts of her native land, but a wild beast raging and despairing; ready to mangle and destroy her enemies; resourceful, powerful, cruel,—blindly, impotently wrathful. Even more attractive to the present writer, and even more significant of the painter's knowledge, is the little nude study of the *Piping Fisher Boy*, who lies prone on a rock by the shore of a grey sea, from which the fishes are dancing at the sound of his pipe. A beautiful piece of subdued colour, a charming, lightly-touched fantasy of thought, a fine piece of powerful draughtsmanship, graceful and natural, imaginative, easy, and "*right*."

Next to these paintings of Mr. Swan's, I think the picture which received less of the praise which was its due, if only because of its unobtrusiveness and subdued key of colouring, was one—entitled *The Silver Lining of the Cloud*—by Mr. Aumonier, afterwards purchased for the Chantrey Trustees.

It is strange how long it takes in England to make work of this quality in the least popular, or obtain for such the recognition deserved. In France such painting would be appreciated at once; in England, and especially in exhibitions, where the key of colour in the majority of the pictures is forced up to an unnaturally high pitch for the purpose of attracting attention, these delicate representations of Nature continually escape notice, not only by the ordinary visitor, but even by the critic whose business it should be to discover them. Mr. Aumonier's landscape art, however, merits far higher praise than that which is connoted by the words delicate and unobtrusive. He is a painter who more worthily carries on the traditions of English landscape than perhaps any other now living, though possibly he may be said to be rivalled in this respect by two or three water-colour artists, notably Mr. Thomas Collier,¹ Mr. Hine (the elder), and Mr. George Fripp. He should be ranked above all of these in the respect of originality, and especially in the great merit of belonging to his time, for Mr. Aumonier's work, though possessing much of the freshness and apparent ease which were such dis-

¹ Mr. Collier is since dead, unrecognised, throughout the whole of a long and honourable life devoted to his art, by the Royal Academy. Mr. Hine is a very old man, a very exquisite artist, quite neglected by the public.



Imp. DUBOIS ET LEROUX, PARIS

EGO ET REX MEVS

Facsimile of an original drawing by Sir JOHN GILBERT. R. A.

tinguishing characteristics of old English landscape painters, and combining with them an almost equal care for, and efficiency of composition, is nevertheless marked by later nineteenth century feeling, and is in no sense an echo of the motive, though it repeats the quality, of a former time. And of the present picture, what higher praise can we give than that it is interesting without affectation, and natural without being naturalistic? For this last we may indeed, in the old phrase, *give hearty thanks*, for of all the many disabilities under which our modern art labours so heavily, the disability of a spurious realism is the most grievous and the most wearisome. How hardly our younger painters labour under the task of representing themselves as possessed of only eyes and hands, and feeling nothing, caring nothing, thinking nothing about the subjects which they select for their pencil, only those who are forced, for their sins, to habitually wander through London picture-galleries can really imagine. The distressing part of the matter is that the best and cleverest of the youngsters are those whom this *nil admirari, nil amare* disease attacks most violently. Jack Horners, with a difference, who have found no plums in nature's pudding, they go about congratulating themselves on that negative achievement with a fervour which would be comic if it were not exasperating, and unfortunately, by help of inconstant fashion and foolish scribes, many folks are led to believe that really this is the be-all and end-all of art, to cover a superficies of canvas with a certain amount of harmonious painting, from which no idea can possibly be extracted, save the idea of the extreme dulness of the gentleman who was responsible for the execution of the work. Such is not Mr. Aumonier's ideal. Like all the really great artists in the world—for in his modest way he *is* a great artist—he retires into the background, and causes his pictures to talk for him. We do not say This is a landscape according to Aumonier, as we *do* say, This is a landscape according to Vicat Cole or Mr. Leader. We simply consider the subject depicted.

There is pleasure in turning to design as facile and impetuous as that of Sir John Gilbert, whose hand has lost nothing in vigour although the artist is now almost the oldest of our painters. Old-fashioned no doubt is the character of the design; the motive too simply picturesque and romantic to find much favour nowadays; the *values* of which the critic—well instructed—loves to talk so sapiently, are here conspicuous only by their absence, and as for *la lumière*—well, probably Sir John knows as little and cares as little for that great fetich of the modern impressionist, as the most Philistine of his comrades of earlier days—shall we say Sir Francis Grant? Still, all defects notwithstanding, this is a work of art, and has about it something which better painting is apt to lack nowadays. Certainly the design is *fair to see*, gallant and fresh, full of

go and spirit, happily audacious. And the boldness is not that of the ignoramus or the bungler; one sees very clearly that whatever we may think of this young knight and his pawing charger, he is exactly what the artist wished him to be—his imperfection, if he be imperfect, or exaggeration, if he be exaggerated, is intentional, calculated, and deliberate. The finest actions, says Louis Stevenson in one of his most brilliant essays, are the better for a bit of purple. So thinks Sir John Gilbert also, and he dashes on *his* bit of purple, not in vainglorious speech, but in grandiosity of line, and in gesture and action, a little theatrical and high-falutin'. For the rest, the present picture is to us pleasanter even than usual, for it lacks the bewilderment, the crowding of men and horses, which is a frequent characteristic of Sir John Gilbert's work. When the motive of his composition is simple this painter is happiest, since he is always capable of making even a single figure tell a story sufficiently—afford us sufficient interest. Something indeed it is, if considered carefully, to have painted for more than half a century without having produced one thoroughly dull composition—something to have towards the close of life an imagination so unwearied and a hand so strong.

Mr. Poynter had this year no large picture, but for the third time repeated the motive which he found so successful in a *Corner of the Market-place*, which was, plainly speaking, a study of a young girl in a classical robe, and with a background and surroundings of similar character. The present work is one of almost equal charm with the first of the series, and is considerably richer in colour. Classical it is *not*, in any but the most superficial sense—but English, and nineteenth-century English, to the core; but few visitors to the Royal Academy will care for that, though all will admire the refinement and thoroughness of the execution, the grace of the girl's pose, the variety and care with which the various marbles, potteries, robes, fruits, and mosaics are painted, and the rich colour effect of the whole. We confess that personally these sham-classic pictures are almost wholly objectionable to us in all their several varieties, from the West-End, waxen delicacy of Sir Frederick Leighton's *Psyche*, down to the coarse and blatant realism of Mr. Solomon's *Hippolyta*; but *On the Temple Steps*, as Mr. Poynter calls his little maiden, is certainly of them the most possible, and humanly speaking, the most pleasant. At least one quality of great art belongs thereto, and that is independence of scale—the picture is quite small, but the execution and the motive are large, and largely treated. This is the work of one who, though extremely limited in his conception of art, and hampered in the execution of his conception by a continual liability to stray from beauty into ugliness (witness else the right shoulder of the girl in our illustration, and the hideous

shoulder-of-mutton line it makes owing to the arrangement of the drapery), is always a conscientious and on the whole a capable workman—an artist, moreover, who has no sympathy with sloppy, cheap, or meretricious art, but toils to produce something artistic—sometimes with success, and sometimes with marked but worthy failure—to the utmost of his ability. The utmost that is in him, as Carlyle put it, is what Mr. Poynter brings to the common stock, and with all his shortcomings there is no man living who has a better right to be a member of the Royal Academy, or whose example could be more safely recommended to young artists to follow so far as perseverance, energy, and single-mindedness are concerned.

Amongst the younger men of the Scotch school there is no one who is just now working more strenuously, or, on the whole, more successfully, than Mr. Farquharson. His landscape—*My Heart's in the Highlands*—despite the abominable, catchpenny maudlin title—is solidly well drawn, and well, though somewhat heavily, painted. Well composed and by no means unpleasing in colour, is the little picture, too, of *Cairo*. This is the kind of work produced by the men who, in the professional phrase, are *running for Associateship*, and we should never be surprised to hear one morning that Mr. Farquharson had been gently lifted to that empyrean where the gods of Burlington House lie beside their nectar. There are truly too many Scotchmen already within the portals; but comradeship is strong in council, and within the Academy, the canny Scot plays a not dissimilar part to that of the Irish party in the House of Commons, and votes solid for the election of his countrymen.

Look, however, at Mr. Farquharson's work, honest and painstaking as it is, by the side of any little sketch of a comparatively unattractive subject by Aumonier, and you will see at once the difference between the work of the man who will probably get into the Academy, and the man who almost certainly will not; and the difference you will note is not in favour of the former. One is education and persistence; the other is simply—art.

In the foregoing pages I have endeavoured, probably at too great length for the interest of my readers, to point out a few of the pictures which are for one reason or another notable in this year's Exhibition of the Royal Academy, and in the remaining portion of the space devoted to the notice of this year's paintings I shall only say a few plain words as to other works of interest, some of which were exhibited in the New and Grosvenor Galleries.

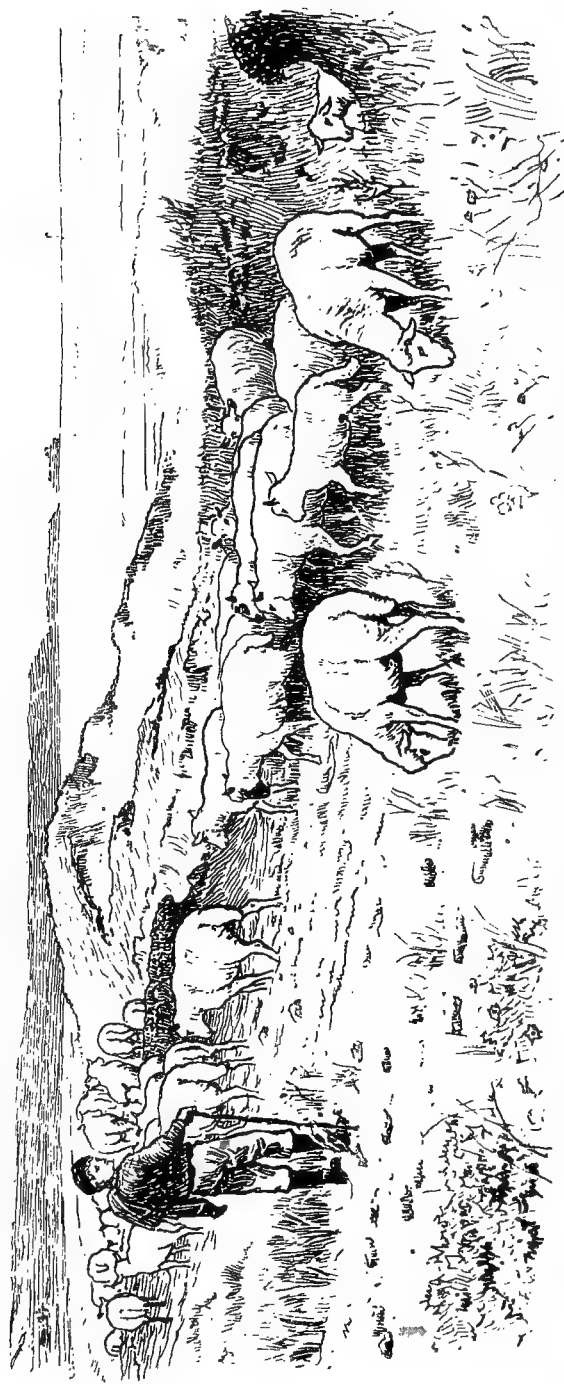
“Few things are more perfect in the present gallery than the

chrysanthemums painted by M. Fantin against a plain grey background; and for quiet fidelity to nature these may be rivalled by the small river scene which Mr. Lavery calls *The Bridge at Gretz*, with its resting oarsman talking to a girl who leans across the parapet: we can almost hear the words they say pass from the bridge to the boat, from the boat to the bridge, through the still, twilight air. A very happy, successful picture this, completely telling the story and entirely justifying the artist's aim.

"No. 1146, *By Order of the Court*, is Mr. Stanhope Forbes' rendering of a country auction, probably either in or near the neighbourhood of Newlyn. As we have never shared in the exaggerated praise which has been freely bestowed upon this clever artist's later works, so we cannot join in the depreciation which has this year followed upon the exhibition of the present picture. Granted by all means, that it is *inky and black*, as the critics affirm, we would point out that there is an absolute necessity from the nature of the scene that this should be the case, if the artist works on the same principles as those which he has hitherto always observed. Figures in a small room, as they are here represented, seen against a narrow window, must, in comparison with the light outside, be as dark as Mr. Forbes has represented them; for the very principle of the *plein air* school is to give to the utmost extent the effect of outdoor light; and as it is for the doing of this that they are always praised, it seems worse than inconsistent to blame one of the cleverest of their number for being true to himself and his school. For the rest, the picture is extremely clever, full of original gesture, evidently studied from life, and instinct too with a subtle mixture of drama and comedy, which is not in the least overstrained or unduly insisted upon. Not a great picture, but a cleverly-constructed and adequately-painted one, and at all events possessing this indubitable virtue—that the facts which it depicts are genuine and actual, relevant to the life of to-day, not echoes from an imaginary past."

Saturday Night at the Savage Club, by Mr. W. H. Bartlett, was excluded from the Royal Academy Exhibition, but was nevertheless an exceptional instance of successful treatment of a most difficult subject.

A special interest attached this year to Mr. Ernest Waterlow's work, of which we give a reproduction on the following page, because the painter had just been admitted to the honours of Associateship. Outside the Council of the Royal Academy the election must have surprised many, for Mr. Waterlow is essentially one of those artists of whom the word *prettiness*, expresses almost the first and last characteristic. He is pre-eminently an inoffensive painter, full of gently-pleasing sentiment, and attractive colour, not



HOMEWARDS

ERNEST WATERLOW, A. R. A

good colour, note, which is an entirely different matter, but colour which is taking and popular, and such as can be successfully reproduced by the chromo-lithographer or the colour-printer. The present picture shows him, I think, at his best, and one feels it almost harsh to criticise work which is so unassuming, so domestic, and so *proper*. I should do better probably to note that the sheep are well drawn and cleverly grouped, that the little fisher-boy shepherd has evidently passed the fourth standard, and never given the good folks at home one moment's anxiety, that all the natural surroundings of the scene are delicately drawn and add to the impression of quiet, comfortable life; and yet, once more, this is evidently not the real thing. This is art of the studio, not of the field and shore; it only palters with the real character and meaning, and is oblivious of the real beauty, of its subject-matter.

Compare with this Mr. Phil Morris' *Poor Jack!* a reproduction of a rough sketch of which is given on the following page. Mr. Morris is one of the most uneven of our painters, and has the credit of having started the dressed-up baby type of picture, which for the last ten years has been so deadening an influence on English art. But he is nevertheless a genuine artist, with a strong feeling for the sea, and for the sea's effect upon those who live habitually in connection with it. His first successes at the Royal Academy, of which he is now an Associate, were made in idyllic pictures of seafaring and country life, and I cannot but think that these subjects are his real province, and that if, giving up painting millinery infants for the Christmas numbers of the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated*, and rather blatant, over-dressed portraits, he would return to the matters in which he takes real interest and for which he has real sympathy, it would be well for his fame and better for himself. The present picture tells its story simply, graphically, and well. This may, of course, be bunkum, but certainly does not look like it. We can hardly fancy but that the artist has seen this lowering sky and these rough fishermen carrying their comrade to his last resting-place. At all events here is a possible presentment of the life of to-day, instinct with a natural emotion which is of all times, and, as such, is a fitting subject for a picture worthily carried out.

Turn back to Mr. Waterlow's more superficially attractive work, or onwards to Mr. Henry Woods' graceful Venetians selling fruit on the Giudecca, and see into what utter insignificance the human motive, even in this rough expression, reduces the manufactured and artificial work. No quainter contrast could perhaps be taken to the picture of which I have just spoken than that which is to be found in Mr. T. M. Rooke's *Triumph of Saul and David* in the New Gallery (reproduced hereafter). Without in the least wishing

to be unkind (and indeed the present writer has frequently shown his admiration of Mr. Rooke's work in the most practical form which admiration of an artist's pictures can take), can we possibly regard the point of view indicated by this picture as anything but ludicrous? Observe, the painters of whom I have lately been speaking regard men and women and nature very differently, but at least they regard, they take into account, such subjects; but here we may almost say that humanity and nature have disappeared entirely from the scene, and have only left—what? These funny little beings, with their extraordinarily disproportionate little legs, and feet which are smaller than their hands, and queer little cockly draperies, seem wholly unlike anything that ever existed, or could exist, upon the face of the earth.

Now supposing that Mr. Rooke painted these figures from ignorance of anatomy, or even from laziness or insufficient study, we might, I think, pardon him. But is this the case? Is not every error here calculated, deliberately adopted, preferred to truth? I think the intrinsic evidence is very strong in favour of this view, especially when we consider that we can trace most of Mr. Rooke's peculiarities to the fountain-head in the work of the artist whom he long served faithfully as an assistant, and whom he still delights to call "Mr. Burne-Jones." His painting and his ideas have alike taken colour from this long associateship, but unfortunately the peculiarities which in the master are but blemishes, are in this faithful pupil sore disfigurements. The curious, morbid twists of Mr. Burne-Jones' mind have taken root in Mr. Rooke's humbler and more religious intellect, and brought forth most extraordinary fruit, in which the Bible and the *laus Veneris* struggle together in eternal contest, like that of Ormuzd and Ahriman; and as Mr. Burne-Jones made man and woman into one composite, quaintly-conceived being, partaking of the characteristics of both sexes, so has Mr. Rooke, not to fail in loyalty to his master, abstracted all manhood and womanhood whatever from the little doll-like creatures in whose presentment he delights. All this is true, but is not the whole truth, for unhuman, doll-like, comic as they are, these little beings are as attractive as the African pigmies appeared to Mr. Stanley. The reason is not far to seek; for this little painter has in him what most of the more robustious spirits of the Academy lack—a strong sense of beauty. His pictures are frequently jewel-like in colour, his faces quaintly, pleadingly pretty, his cockly draperies full of invention, arrangement, and grace of line. Moreover, from one corner of his pictures to another we always find every morsel of space has been thought of as precious, and made as delightful to the eye and mind as Mr. Rooke could compass. There are here no wastes of canvas, no spaces *to let*, to use the old studio phrase, no lack of interest or thought to be

found anywhere. The art is perverted, almost ludicrous, certainly feeble, but genuine and true to itself, or rather to the inspiration of Mr. Burne-Jones, upon which it has been founded.

Mr. Arthur Hacker's *Vae Victis!*—*The Sack of Morocco by the Almohades*, is one of those pictures which are more common in the French Salon than in an English exhibition. It is large, grandiose in treatment, and evidences the thorough training of the artist. In fact the composition is such as a clever student would produce in competing for the *Prix de Rome*, or any other of the great Beaux Arts prizes. In the Academy, however, such pictures are rare, and the work is useful less for intrinsic attractiveness than as marking the point of performance to which foreign painters habitually attain, and which the successful students of foreign schools rarely fail to reach. Useful too at Burlington House as a silent protest against the timid and restrained proprieties which distinguish the majority of the pictures. Though the treatment of the nude can scarcely be said to form the main motive of this composition, yet the portion of the picture in which that treatment occurs has been dealt with by Mr. Hacker as simply and frankly as the rest of his subject. We do not feel that this artist has been above all things afraid of offending the delicate susceptibilities of the British matron; he has not sought to shock them, it is true, and has arranged the bodies of his murdered women with considerable grace and dexterity to that end, but otherwise the fear of the censor has not been before his eye. The picture is well painted, and the composition, though perhaps not very original, is ingenious and pleasant, and Mr. Hacker is hardly to blame if in looking at his work we are forced to think of that of Benjamin Constant. For as a rule these Eastern subjects, especially such as involve elaborate figure-composition, are almost entirely the property of French artists. The present is a notable attempt on the part of an Englishman to compete with the last-mentioned on a ground which they have made specially their own.

Mr. Henry Woods' *Fruitsellers in the Giudecca* is a pleasant change from these massacred women, and has not only this merit to recommend it, but is extremely clever from the artistic point of view, and if a little wanting in subject, full of accurate detail and brilliant colour. I always feel, however, that the broad-shouldered English quality of Mr. Woods' art is a little out of place in depicting the life of the lagoons. The charm of Venice, at all events to those who know her well, is a charm of dirt rather than cleanliness, of Bohemianism rather than respectability, of freedom rather than restraint. Beauty there breaks forcibly as it were through the opposing uglinesses of poverty and vice, or lies side by side with them in the strangest places; and Mr. Henry Woods' Venice has

always been what Venice herself never is—swept and garnished—for clean rather than unclean spirits to dwell in, and there is a pretty mildness and comely health about his women's faces, such as we may frequently see, or at least expect to see, in an English dairy-maid, but such as the present writer—who knows Venice well—has never seen there.

Mr. Arthur Lemon's *Conversion of St. Hubert*, though not to my thinking one of his finest works, strikes at least a more real and far more genuine artistic note than that of which we have been speaking. Amongst all our painters who take their chief subjects from animal life, Mr. Lemon is the one who at present shows most poetic feeling, and whose work has most trace of originality. It is curious to notice that, despite a certain roughness of execution, the brushwork of this painter, and the whole manner and method of his art, have far more affinity with ancient painting than with that of the present day. He has a peculiar and enviable faculty of giving both to his horses and men large free gestures, which are at once graceful and vigorous, and which are, above all, momentary, not reminding us at all of the studio-posed model, or a movement which has been arrested for the purpose of the picture. Look for instance at this *Conversion of St. Hubert*, and note therein the startled gesture of the horse, and the half-frightened, half-warlike appearance of the Saint. The clenched fist and arm drawn back to strike, combined with the pose of the head and body of the latter, tell their story of half-fearful curiosity, and readiness to resist, most thoroughly; and it is also notable how admirably Mr. Lemon's landscape here, as in most of his contributions, echoes and reinforces the sentiment he wishes to depict. Emphatically this young painter is doing good and original work, and deserves full recognition.

Mr. Keeley Halswelle is another of the artists who have this year forsaken their accustomed subjects; and he gives us here not a landscape pure and simple, as is his wont, but the high street of a country town on a wet day. True, he would not be Mr. Halswelle if he did not manage to get the satin reflections (which he usually shows us upon the surface of lake or river) on the wet pavement and slushy road; and in the brief space of sky above the houses, we see, with almost the satisfaction that we welcome an old friend, his cumulus clouds with their wan lights and faint shadows. Still, though he has *prettified* his market town, and thereby lost much of the reality, and, if only he could so persuade himself, of the beauty of the scene, he has made it into a successful picture, and has rendered the effect of falling rain and the atmosphere of absolute dulness and boredom very happily. We can almost imagine a dejected traveller, way-



THE CONVERSION OF ST. HUBERT

ARTHUR LEMON
(*Facsimile of an Original Drawing*)
In the possession of the author

bound by some unhappy accident, at the coffee-room window of the red commercial hotel, watching drearily the passing sheep and scattered townsfolk, and wondering what in heaven and earth he shall do with himself till dinner-time.

There were two pictures at the Grosvenor Gallery this year which I must mention as fine examples of modern Anglo-French work.

If we at all accept its style of art, there is no work of such importance in the Gallery as Mr. La Thangue's large *Leaving Home*. In any case this would be a notable picture for strength and marvellous freshness of impression. The subject is a simple one enough, a village girl leaving home for *service* for the first time. She is sitting in a carrier's cart with her face covered by her hands, the carrier is whipping up his old grey horse with professional indifference, her parents, and brothers and sisters, are all at the cottage gate to say good-bye. The horse is trotting plump towards us out of the picture : one feels almost tempted to get out of the way, so realistic is the impression of movement. If the work, however, had only possessed these merits, we should have scarcely thought it deserving of such high praise, but Mr. La Thangue has in the present instance succeeded in painting not only an extraordinarily realistic picture, but one in which the study of sentiment and character is very highly above the average. The difference in the expression of grief in the mother's and father's faces is very subtle and profoundly natural, so are the varying expressions of the younger children, so is the unconcern, or rather obliviousness, of the driver. Note, too, for a little piece of genuine insight, the gesture with which the girl, through all her sorrow, still clings to the band-box upon her knee. Certainly we will not quarrel with realistic art if it will frequently give us such work as this, and feel almost inclined to say that Mr. La Thangue shall have a license to be as ugly as he pleases—and he does sometimes please to be very ugly indeed—if only he will stray into beauty now and then, as he has done here. This artist's second contribution, which is the portrait of an unnamed painter (is it his own ?) is also intensely clever ; but in this the vice of the Impressionist school shows prominently, and the strength is coarse, almost blatant.

At the very opposite pole of artistic endeavour stands the large work by Mr. Sargent entitled *Ightham Moat—Ladies Playing at Bowls*. In its way, this is as clever as Mr. La Thangue's *Leaving Home* ; but to call the way peculiar, would be but a mild characterisation. The picture is utterly peculiar, and at first sight we might well be excused for finding it utterly abominable. The grass lawn on which the players are standing is, in this picture, a vast expanse of raw and almost ungradated green, which the painter appears to

have deliberately smeared over the canvas so as to produce the utmost possible deadness and dull uniformity. *Ightham Moat* itself, for so we suppose the house is called, is of a pinkish-purple, and the trees at the back of the picture are dark, shapeless masses, against a wan, almost colourless sky. The figures are nearly all in dark dresses, standing midway in the picture, and at first the effect of the whole composition is childlike—almost infantile. One penny plain, two-pence coloured—and this is one of the twopenny ones—such is the impression which many people will carry away from Mr. Sargent's work. But the second and the third look—still more the fourth and fifth—reveal capacities therein which are by no means childlike, and qualities which are rarely found save in great art. The sense of space, for instance, which the picture gives, is enormous, the cool freshness most restful and delightful; the drawing of the figures is more than good, their pose and composition, and, as it were, incidental character, leave, as a house-agent would say, nothing to be desired. Most admirable of all is the impression of reality which the scene conveys. The painter entirely disappears from sight, and as for the manner by which he has arrived at his result, we neither know nor care anything. The result is there—a vivid impression of a real evening with real figures enjoying the coolness. The point seems to me to be this: Mr. Sargent boldly creates an artistic convention instead of attempting to follow out the truth of nature, and if he once succeeds in making us accept that convention, we are in his hands throughout. Granted that the details of any scene *could* look like this, granted that the effect of the whole is independent of, and even based upon, the defective detail of each individual portion of the picture, then Mr. Sargent is a great master in the future development of art. Personally, I do not believe that any art truth very worthy of the telling can be rightly built upon individual uglinesses. I will not grant that any man has a right to spread his picture with large portions of crude and unpleasing colour for the sake of procuring a given effect of atmosphere, or a given harmony of impression; all the fine art of the world hitherto has been beautiful in detail, and in the minutest portion, as well as in mass. You cannot cut a square inch out of a Titian without seeing it to be lovely colour, and I think that it is essentially this total perfection, this value of and care for every speck of the canvas, which makes a great art, or a great painter.

In conclusion of these somewhat disjointed notes on the exhibitions of the Royal Academy, I need only repeat that there are to be found therein many criticisms and expressions which I should endeavour to modify or soften if the paper had to be re-written from the point of view of to-day. I have, however, left these, thinking it more necessary to know what was the impression produced by the

works criticised at their date of exhibition, than to avail myself of subsequent experience and judgment, which I could scarcely hope would be unmodified by the public estimate. If the notes show any good quality, I venture to hope they will show the writer endeavoured to express his views clearly, and without partizan feeling. In so far as the objective truth and value of the criticism are concerned, the public can judge for itself how far time has corroborated or falsified my testimony.

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